

## Welcome to the Club ... Parent – Child Food Struggles

If you have a child who is a picky eater, welcome to the club! This is perfectly normal and not usually a cause for concern. Each meal does not have to be a perfect. Neither does each day. Don't worry about how little your child eats as children grow more slowly in their preschool years than in infancy. Slower growth needs less food.

### The Golden Rule

The bottom line is that it is your responsibility to provide healthy foods for your family to eat and to set a pleasant environment for eating. Kids get to decide how much they eat, and even whether they eat.

### Some Tips

Here are some tips on how to encourage a healthy relationship with food and not a battle of wills at the dinner table.

- Aim for 3 meals and 2 snacks each day to keep little stomach's fueled up
- Involve kids in food preparation- scrub potatoes, rip up lettuce, peel carrots, pile vegetables into a bowl, stir muffin ingredients or pancake batter, crack eggs.
- Start a small garden or an indoor herb garden to snip, have the kids choose produce at the grocery store
- Role model good eating behaviours; turning off the TV, eating together at the table, trying new foods, eating breakfast
- Expose your kids to as much variety for new tastes, textures and food combinations as you can in the first two years. Keep going with older kids but realize your efforts will take longer to sink in.
- Remember to refer to fruit or favourite vegetables as "treats" along with candy or ice cream goodies.
- Limit the "sometimes" foods that come into your house
- Check the amount of juice or milk your child drink daily. More than ½ cup of juice and more than 2-3 cups of milk can leave little room for other food
- Don't let the kitchen turn into a diner
- Is your child tired, distracted or ill? Rest or a calm activity before meals often helps a child settle down to eat
- Try different ways of presenting the same food. For example, raw cauliflower with dip, steamed with butter, or roasted with garlic and olive oil
- Build on what the kids will accept in order to expand their palate
- Accept refusals without a fuss
- Don't assume your kid won't like something before they try it. Example: pickled herring.

### Please Don't Say ...

- "You can't have dessert until you finish your squash!"
- "There are kids in this world who are starving!"
- "Please just eat one more bite!"
- "You're not leaving the table until you've finished!"
- "What a good girl/boy! You cleaned your whole plate!"
- "What a good eater your brother/sister is!"

### Daily Serving Sizes for Preschoolers

(Keep in mind that all children are different sizes and shapes, not to mention energy levels!)

Carbohydrates (6 servings each day)  
Food: bread, rice, pasta, cereal, crackers

3 Year-Old Portion Size: ½ slice or 5 Tablespoons

4 Year-Old Portion Size: 1 slice or ½ cup

Fruits and Vegetables (5 servings each day)

3 Year-Old Portion Size: ½ piece (cut up) or 5 Tbsp

4 Year-Old Portion Size: 1 piece or ½ cup

Dairy (2 servings each day)

Food: milk, yogurt, cheese

3 Year-Old Portion Size: 1 cup or 2 ounces

4 Year-Old Portion Size: 1 cup or 2 ounces

Protein (2 servings each day)

Food: meat, poultry, fish, beans/legumes, eggs

3 Year-Old Portion Size: 1 ounce or 5 Tbsp

4 Year-Old Portion Size: 2 ounces or ½ cup

### Favourite Resources

How To Get Your Kid To Eat...But Not Too Much  
By Ellyn Satter, 1987

The 101 Most Asked Nutrition Questions  
By Patricia Chuey, 1999

Nutrition Action Healthletter  
Centre for Science in the Public Interest  
[www.cspinet.org/canada](http://www.cspinet.org/canada)

**If you want to try sneaking in vegetables**

<http://familyfun.go.com/recipes/family/feature/dony19sneak/>

**If you want someone else to do the cooking...**

<http://www.dinnerworks.com/>  
<http://sensationalsuppers.com/>

**If you want to learn more about nutrition from a credible source...**

<http://www.dietitians.ca>  
[www.healthycanadians.ca](http://www.healthycanadians.ca)