

# Five Strategies to Reduce Mealtime Battles with Children Under the Age of 6



*Is the child in your home a picky eater? Picky eating happens when a child refuses food often or eats the same food over and over. Picky eating usually peaks in the toddler and preschool years. During the early years, children often seek “sameness” as much as possible, including sticking to the same small group of foods. This consistency helps them feel safe and secure during a period of rapid change.*



## 1 Make sure they are hungry.

Kids need regular meals and snacks throughout the day but if they graze all day long (even if it is just milk or juice), they won't be hungry enough to eat when it's 'meal time'.

## 2 Let them choose.

The more you get them involved with food, the more likely they are to eat it. Serve food family-style whenever possible and let them choose which foods they want to put on their plate.

## 3 Get them involved.

Getting kids in the kitchen is one of the top strategies to improving food acceptance. Touching, feeling, smelling, and possibly tasting food without the pressure of having it on their plate will help children get more familiar with different foods and be more likely to eat them.

## 4 Eat together.

Eating together (screen-free) provides a time to connect and have caregivers model a healthy relationship with food. Kids are also more likely to try a food if they see their caregivers eating them.

## 5 Provide unfamiliar foods with familiar foods.

When planning meals, choose at least one food you know the child will like, known as a “safe” food. This can be bread, rice, pasta, fruit, etc. This way, they will have the option to eat that food if all else fails.