

# Understanding Your Picky Eater

Joan Cook, MS, RD



Being a picky eater is part of what it means to be a toddler. There are developmental reasons why kids between one and three years of age will poke and play with their food. After a year of rapid growth (the average one-year old has tripled her birth weight), toddlers gain weight more slowly. So, of course, they need less food. They may eat only fruits one day, and vegetables the next. Toddlers from one to three years of age need between 1,000 and 1,300 calories a day, yet they may not eat this amount every day. Aim for a nutritionally balanced week, not a balanced day.

Parents also need to be in touch with their own expectations about how much their toddler should eat. It is unrealistic to expect a toddler

to eat a large amount of food at each meal every day. After all, a toddler's stomach is the same size as her clenched fist.

Ellyn Satter, MS RD LCSW BCD, a researcher and practitioner in the field of pediatric feeding practices, explains that both parents and children have their own "jobs" to do when it comes to eating. Parents are responsible for providing healthy meals and snacks. Children are responsible for what and how much to eat. This helps children learn what it feels like to be hungry and then full and how to make healthy choices based on this awareness.

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## Gold Sneaker Newsletter

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The Gold Sneaker newsletter is expected to be published twice per year.

Gold Sneaker recognized facilities, as well as health educators and county health directors, are invited to contribute suggestions for topics, interesting stories, lessons learned or resources from which Gold Sneaker facilities may benefit.

Technical assistance is also available:

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The Mayo Clinic staff has these suggestions for what you can do to help your child enjoy a range of foods:

**1. Respect your child's appetite, or lack of one**

If your child isn't hungry, don't force a meal or snack. Likewise don't bribe or force your child to eat certain foods or clean his plate. This might ignite, or reinforce, a power struggle over food. In addition, your child might come to associate mealtime with anxiety and frustration or become less sensitive to his or her own hunger and fullness cues.

**2. Stick to the routine**

Serve meals and snacks at about the same times every day. You can provide milk or 100 percent juice with the food, but offer water between meals and snacks. Allowing your child to fill up on juice, milk or snacks throughout the day might decrease her appetite for meals.

**3. Be patient with new foods**

Young children often touch or smell new foods, and might even put tiny bits in their mouths and then take them back out again. Your child might need repeated exposure to a new food before he takes the first bite.

**4. Make it fun**

Serve broccoli and other vegetables with a favorite dip or sauce. Cut foods into various shapes with cookie cutters. Serve a variety of brightly colored foods.

**5. Recruit your child's help**

At the grocery store, ask your child to help you select fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods. Don't buy anything you don't want your child to eat. At home, encourage your child to help you rinse veggies, stir batter or set the table.

**6. Set a good example**

If you eat a variety of healthy foods, your child is more likely to follow suit.

**7. Minimize distractions**

Turn off the television and other electronic devices during meals. This will help your child focus on eating. Keep in mind that television advertising might also encourage your child to desire sugary or less nutritious foods.

**8. Don't offer dessert as a reward**

Withholding dessert sends the message that dessert is the best food, which might only increase your child's desire for sweets. You might select one or two nights a week as dessert nights, and skip dessert the rest of the week – or redefine dessert as fruit, yogurt or other healthy choices.

**9. Don't be a short-order cook**

Preparing a separate meal for your child after he or she rejects the original meal might promote picky eating. Encourage your child to stay at the table for the designated mealtime – even if she doesn't eat. Keep serving your child healthy choices until they become familiar and preferred.

If you're concerned that picky eating is compromising your child's growth and development, consult your child's doctor. He or she can plot your child's growth on a growth chart. In addition, consider recording the types and amounts of food your child eats for three days. The big picture might help ease your worries. A food log can also help your child's doctor determine any problems.

In the meantime, remember that your child's eating habits won't likely change overnight – but the small steps you take each day can help promote a lifetime of healthy eating. For more information about picky eaters, email Joan Cook at [Joan.Cook@tn.gov](mailto:Joan.Cook@tn.gov) or call (615) 253-8745.

Resources for healthy feeding:

<http://www.ellynatterinstitute.org/>

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/picky-eaters.html>



## Remember the ABC's of Safe Sleep:

Babies should sleep **A**lone,  
on their **B**ack, and in a **C**rib

[safesleep.tn.gov](http://safesleep.tn.gov)



## Communicating Safety Messages to Parents

Rachel Heitmann, MS

Effective communication with parents in a child care setting is crucial. Child care providers are often thought of as a trusted source of information for parents, putting child care providers in a unique position to educate parents about child safety. Two critical safety areas child care providers can teach parents about are safe sleep for infants and the use of car seats.

In 2013, 117 babies died in Tennessee because of sleep-related causes. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends caregivers follow the ABC's of safe sleep; babies should be placed Alone, on their Back and in a Crib. Child care providers can communicate this message to parents using free educational materials provided by the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH). TDH will provide flyers, door hangers and posters for child care providers to utilize with parents. To order materials, go to <http://safesleep.tn.gov>.

Another important safety topic to discuss with parents is the use of child safety seats. From 2009-2013, 65 children ages 0-8 died in motor vehicle crashes. Thirty of these children (46%) were not using a child safety seat or booster seat. According to Safekids, when used correctly, child safety seats can reduce the risk of death by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers. If a family cannot afford to purchase a safety seat for an infant or older child, there are several local agencies that may be able to

furnish one for them. To find the agency nearest you, please email [Rachel.Heitmann@tn.gov](mailto:Rachel.Heitmann@tn.gov) or call 615-741-0368.

To learn more about communicating with parents click on the links below:

<http://www.extension.org/pages/67875/provider-parent-relationships-7-keys-to-good-communication>

<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/pages/publicationD.jsp?publicationId=1277>



# Holiday Health and Safety Tips

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The holidays are a great opportunity to enjoy time with family and friends, celebrate life, to be grateful, and reflect on what's important. They are also a time to appreciate the gift of health. Here are some holiday tips to support your efforts for health and safety this season.

# The Holidays!

## Wash your hands often.

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water, and rub them together for at least 20 seconds. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

## Stay warm.

Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers.

## Manage stress.

The holidays don't need to take a toll on your health and pocketbook. Keep your commitments and spending in check. Balance work, home, and play. Get support from family and friends. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook. Make sure to get proper sleep.

## Travel safely.

Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don't drink and drive, and don't let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt appropriate for his/her height, weight, and age.

## Be smoke-free.

Avoid smoking and breathing other people's smoke. If you smoke, quit today! Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or talk to your health care provider for help.

## Get check-ups and vaccinations.

Exams and screenings can help find potential problems early, when the chances for treatment and cure are often better. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for needed exams and screenings. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history. Get health insurance through [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov) if needed.

## Watch the kids.

Children are at high risk for injuries. Keep a watchful eye on your kids when they're eating and playing. Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, choking hazards (like coins and hard candy), and other objects out of kids' reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Make sure toys are used properly. Develop rules about acceptable and safe behaviors, including using electronic media.

## Prevent injuries.

Injuries can happen anywhere, and some often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of climbing on furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals. Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or skateboarding to help prevent head injuries. Keep vaccinations up to date.

Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Don't use generators, grills, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning devices inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test them once a month, and replace batteries twice a year.

## Handle and prepare food safely.

As you prepare holiday meals, keep yourself and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.

## Eat healthy, and be active.

With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose fresh fruit as a festive and sweet substitute for candy. Limit fats, salt, and sugary foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.