

Suggestions for Getting Toddlers to Eat

1. If you want your children to eat a variety of foods, open your mind and try new foods too.
2. If a toddler doesn't like a particular food, encourage him to mix it with a food you know he does like.
3. When serving fresh veggies, serve them with a sauce to dip it in.
4. Get your toddler involved in choosing foods. "Should we have peas or carrots tonight?" "Do you want peaches or mangoes?"
5. Add one new fruit or vegetable each week.
6. Make food look fun. Cut sandwiches in circles, triangles, or hearts. Decorate pancakes with fresh strawberry happy faces.
7. Take your toddler to a farm, an orchard, or a dairy to introduce him to where food comes from. Take him to the grocery store to help choose healthy foods.
8. Serve only 100% fruit juices or fruit-vegetable combinations with no sugar added.
9. Smoothies are a way to get fruit and other nutritious foods into your child's diet. Some ingredients to add: fresh or frozen fruit, tofu, hard-cooked egg whites, milk, or yogurt. Flax seeds add fiber and omega 3.
10. Add healthy foods to dishes your toddler already likes, but don't try sneaking it in. Tell him you are making his favorite meal with something special. Help him have an adventurous attitude toward eating.
11. Never use a sweet treat to bribe him into eating nutritious food. Never withhold a sweet treat as punishment for not eating healthy food either.
12. A good rule of thumb: 1 tablespoon of each kind of food for each year of your child's age.
13. Don't offer snacks close to mealtime. A child who is hungry is more eager to eat what is provided.
14. Offer the new food early in the meal while he is most hungry.
15. If you are trying to broaden your child's appetite, don't worry about the mess he makes. Let him eat with his fingers or spoon-feed himself. Better to have a mess to clean up than a picky eater in the future. He'll learn better table manners as he gets older.
16. Sitting at the table to eat helps children focus on eating instead of playing or watching TV.
17. Don't have a toddler sit until they eat what is on their plate. When everyone else is done, it is time to leave the table and not eat until the next meal or scheduled snack time. He will not starve if he misses a meal or two. However, he will not be able to use not eating as a control mechanism.
18. Offer new foods several times. It may take several times before he decides they are good.