

What do I do about my picky eater?

FEEDING CHILDREN:

Children make good food choices if nutritious foods are offered.

A good rule to use when feeding young children is: **Parents choose what, when and how food is offered; Children choose how much to eat and whether to eat at all.**

• **Struggling with children over food doesn't help to form good eating habits.** Forcing children to eat certain foods or withholding healthy food because you are concerned about calories never works. These issues can turn mealtime into a battleground.

• **Be sure that the food you offer is nutritious, varied and it looks good to eat.** What does your child find in the kitchen when she is hungry for a snack? Are there nutritious choices like whole wheat crackers, pretzels, raisins, rice cakes, cheese, peanut butter, fruit and raw vegetables with dip? This goes for mealtime too.

• **Most young children don't want to try new foods the first time they are offered.** If your child sees you enjoying a variety of foods, and they are offered over a long period of time, he may just try some. Don't worry that all he ate at lunch was carrots or only potatoes at dinner. Look at the food your child is eating over a week's time. As long as he is getting a variety of nutritious foods your child is getting what his body needs.

• **Below are some Do's and Don'ts for feeding children.**

DO

- * involve your child in cooking meals.
- * allow everyone to serve their own food.
- * encourage small portions with the option of getting seconds.
- * set a good example by trying new foods and eating nutritious foods.
- * create rules for acceptable behavior at the table.
- * consult your doctor for a referral to a dietician or nutritionist if you are concerned about your child's eating habits.
- * offer several foods at each meal along with bread.
- * make mealtime a relaxing, enjoyable time for everyone.

DON'T

- * use food as a reward or bribe.
- * become preoccupied with picky eating habits they pass.
- * become a short order cook to please different tastes.
- * mix foods together casserole style, most young children like to see each food they eat.
- * allow eating between meal and snack time for children over the age of three years old.