

How Do I Get My Child to Eat?

The answer is simple: You can't! There is no way to *make* your child eat. And the good news is, it's not your job.

Your job is to:

- Provide healthy food choices at meals and snacks
- Set regular meal and snack times
- Decide where food is served

Your child's job is to choose:

- What foods to eat from the choices you offer
- How much to eat
- If she wants to eat at all

Tips for handling common concerns:

My child will not eat new foods.

- Offer one new food at a time, with foods she likes.
- Give a small amount. Do not worry if your child does not eat it. Offer it again at another time. You may need to offer it many times before she will eat it.
- Do not expect your child to like everything. All of us have some foods we do not like.

My child only wants to eat one kind of food.

- This is normal at this age. Let her eat what she wants, if it is a healthy food.
- Offer her other foods, too. After a few days, she will probably try other foods.





My child will not eat what I serve her.

She wants something else.

- Try to have at least one food she likes at each meal, along with the other foods.
- Let your child help with meals. Children like to eat foods they help to prepare.
- Sometimes offer her 2 choices, and let her pick one.

My child does not want to eat at all or does not eat much.

- Respond as little as possible. Putting pressure on your child to eat will only make it worse.
- Have your child sit at the table with the family. If she doesn't want to eat, that is OK. She can eat at the next meal or snack. Snacks and meals should be about every 2 to 3 hours. Scheduled meals and snacks are important so that you know your child will have many chances to eat throughout the day.
- Make sure she does not fill up on milk, juice or sweet drinks between meals. Children this age only need 2 cups of milk and/or milk products every day. Limit juice to 4 ounces a day. Offer water in a cup when she is thirsty.



She should be drinking only from a cup now, not a bottle.

- Do not worry if she skips a meal sometimes. She will make up for it at the next meal.
- Plan to serve 3 meals and 2-3 snacks a day. Serve snacks halfway between meals so she is hungry at the next mealtime.
- Young children are smart eaters. They eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full.
- Remember, it is normal for children to eat less after they turn 1 year old. They are not growing as fast.