

Questions and Answers – Strategies for Feeding Your Picky Eaters, for the toddler and early school age child – 12/8/20

Question:

I have 2 kids. One has developmental delays and is very small. We need to pump calories into her. She eats best when in front of a video. Our other daughter is robust, and we have to watch her calorie intake. She often asks for more food than I think healthy. They have very different needs. How do we accommodate both?

Answer:

For both children the overall approach would be the same – offer a variety of healthy food choices and allow them to choose which/how much foods feel right for them. If there are growth concerns for your smaller child talk to your pediatrician. Offering calorie-rich foods for snacks/meals to bulk up calorie intake throughout the day may be recommended. Research has shown that trying to limit food intake for children who are growing more quickly tends to backfire in the long run. Focus on teaching the children to identify feelings of hunger versus fullness and encourage healthy levels of physical activity.

Question:

What do you do when your child is distracted with everything on the table including the food and she will play and not eat?

Answer:

Strategies you can use during mealtimes are having a timer or clock that starts when your child sits down at the table or consider working in a set number of breaks throughout the meal if your child has a very hard time sitting still.

Question:

My 3-year-old does not like to eat in the morning. We have to leave for school at 8:10 am. He gets up between 6:30-7:00 am. He is autistic and has sensory issues. He has snack at 9:45 am at school. Any suggestions?

Answer: Offer your child the opportunity to eat, but don't force him. Make sure he has enough snack and lunch items he likes and can fill in the calories that he may have missed at breakfast.

Question:

Sometimes my 5-year-old child eats very well while he is watching an iPad. He seems to think that eating is a good time to enjoy the screen time. I tried to stop this, but there was a trade-off between eating and not watching an iPad...what should I do?

Answer: Start by limiting iPad for some but not all meals/snacks. The family could also provide an alternative non-screen activity such as music or audio book during some meals or snacks.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/childhood-feeding-problems/>

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/by-eating-disorder/arfid>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/nutrition-for-kids/art-20049335>

<https://www.feedinglittles.com>

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/browse-by-audience/view-all-audiences/children/kids>

<https://www.jennyfriedmannutrition.com/>

<https://snacks-with-jax.com/2019/02/25/reverse-picky-eating-with-food-chaining/>

<https://www.meganboitano.com/blog/sensory-food-aversion-refusing-textures>