

# 10 Tips for Working with Children who are Selective Eaters



1. Involve kids in the preparation of food. Sometimes a child needs to be exposed to foods gradually before they eat it. Touching, cooking, and preparing is a great first step.



2. Make sure adults in the home are eating the foods you want your children to eat.

3. Do not label your child as “not eating vegetables” or as a “picky eater”, you don't want that to become a part of their identity. Focus more on praising them around the healthy food they are willing to try.

4. Make sure you give your child a strategy for what to do if they try a food they do not like. Options include spitting the food into a napkin, or chewing and swallowing anyway.



NO, JELLY DOUGHNUTS GROSS ME OUT. THEY'RE LIKE EATING GIANT, SQUISHY BUGS. YOU BITE INTO THEM AND ALL THEIR PURPLE GUTS SPILL OUT THE OTHER END.



5. Discuss what they like and dislike about foods in specific terms (not bad or yucky but mushy or slimy) so that they can see you picking foods they are probably going to like. Involve them in the choice of which healthy “new” foods to try.

6. When you want to introduce a new food, choose a time when the child is not over tired. It is great if you can get into a regular habit of trying new foods with them, routine can help set up expectations and prevent arguments.

7. Avoid arguments at mealtimes, and do not yell if they refuse to try a new food. Many children with selective eating already worry about trying new foods, if they feel too much additional pressure it may backfire.



8. If your child tries a new food, reward them for trying (this can be verbal praise) even if they do not like it. This will reinforce the behavior and encourage them to try again in the future.



9. If your child is willing, set up an expectation that some of each food being prepared for a meal is put onto their plate. Even better is if you have an agreement that they take one bite of everything.

10. Make trying new foods more fun or interesting by decorating the plate with the foods or using dips/spreads that they like in combination with the new food.

11. Remember: you are not alone!

