

## Helping a “Choosy” Eater

### What would you do?

- **Sara-Mei** won't eat anything green - she even refuses an entire meal if even one green pea appears on her plate.
- **Santiago** is interested in everything at the table BUT eating.
- **Dillion** gets upset when one food on his plate touches another.
- **Mariffa** won't eat anything but an orange or a banana this week; last week she would only eat peanut butter sandwiches.



### "Choosy" eating is a child-size step toward growing up and showing independence.

- In fact, what seems like a challenge to you may be an early step toward making food choices.
- A child's "No" doesn't always mean no. What seems "choosy" may just be your child's awkward first steps in learning to make decisions.

### What appears to be "choosy" eating may instead be a smaller appetite.

- Preschool-age children grow and develop at a slower rate than toddlers do.
- If left alone, most children become hearty eaters again when their body grows and requires more food for energy.

### The best advice for you: relax and be patient!

- Learn how to handle eating challenges and how to avoid conflict. That way, your child won't learn to use food as a way to exert control.

## Ten Ways To Help a "Choosy" Eater

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- 1. Don't worry if your child will only eat certain foods.** These periods usually don't last long.
- 2. Consider what a child eats over several days,** not just at each meal. Most kids eat a better variety of foods than a parent thinks.
- 3. Trust your child's appetite** rather than trying to force them to eat everything on their plate. Forcing a child to eat more encourages overeating.
- 4. Set reasonable time limits for the start and end of a meal,** then remove the plate quietly. What's reasonable depends on each child.
- 5. Stay positive** and avoid criticizing or calling the child a "picky eater." Children believe what you say!
- 6. Serve food plain, and respect the "no foods touching"** rule if that's important to your child. This will pass.
- 7. Avoid being a short-order cook.** Offer the same food to the entire family. Plan at least one food everyone will eat.
- 8. Substitute a similar food.** If a child doesn't like a certain food, such as sweet potatoes, offer squash instead.
- 9. Provide just two or three choices,** not a huge assortment of food. Then let your child decide what to eat.
- 10. Focus on your child's positive eating behavior not on the food.**

