

My Child Won't Eat Vegetables

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

My son won't eat vegetables what should I do?

The most important thing for parents to do when faced with a child refusing a food group is to try to objectively analyze the situation. The following important factors should be considered: what is your child's weight/height, how balanced is his diet, has he always refused vegetables, how challenging is it for him to have the vegetables on his plate, how willing is he to try them?

Some children as young feeders will eat anything that is placed on a spoon. Restrictive eating then occurs with the inability to establish the oral motor skills necessary for successful transition to table foods. With this increased feeding challenge, picky eating becomes habitual and restrictive eating results. If this is the case for your child, a referral for a feeding evaluation is indicated.

A lot of kids make food preferences and unfortunately, children often make unhealthy food choices if allowed. If you think about it just based on chewing skills, junk food is a lot easier to eat than any vegetable, which often has multiple textures. There are some things that you can do to help your child make healthy and varied food choices.

Family meals are best with healthy food choices. If unhealthy foods are not in the house, then your child will not have the unhealthy foods to choose. Also, you are a very strong model for healthy eating.

Reduce stress around mealtime. Remember that it can take up to 20 unstressed exposures before a child will try a new food. Always offer the food again at another time if your child refuses. The biggest mistake parents make is not offering a refused food again.

Be creative with your cooking. Cook books like Jessica Seinfeld's Deceptively Delicious is full of ideas to nutritionally supplement your cooking. Although she provides great ideas, her ideas should only supplement your cooking, as your child should be able to eat a good variety of vegetables.

Make sure that all snacks are nutritionally sound and scheduled. If a child is grazing all day long, they will never be hungry for dinner foods and vegetables.

Remember, kids' appetites can vary significantly from one day to the next. One bad eating day is not the end of the world. Look at the variety of food that your child is eating over the course of a week and hopefully things will look better than you thought. If you are concerned or if your child refuses all vegetable or eats less than 30 foods, a complete feeding evaluation is likely necessary.