

Challenging Eaters

By: Joan Trute MA, RD

Do you have a picky eater at home? A child that only eats a few foods? Concerned that your child eats too much? Then these guidelines are for you.

Helpful suggestions for Mom and Dad

- Set a regular schedule for meals and snacks- young children may eat 5-6 times a day.
- Begin meals/snacks with small portions and allow for seconds.
- Offer 3 or more food groups at each meal or snack.
- Offer a variety of shapes and colors. Try different fruits such as mango, kiwi and watermelon.
- Offer different choices within a food groups (carrots, green beans and zucchini).
- Encourage your child to eat nutritious foods first, but don't subscribe to the "clean plate club".

Your child will be more or less hungry on some days. It's best to let them lead. If they are hungrier, they'll ask for more; if not, there is usually no reason to worry that they aren't eating enough. Include carbohydrate, protein, and fat at each meal and snack for long lasting energy.

Let Your Child:

- Decide when to eat or not.
- Decide what to eat of the choices offered.

Portion Size Suggestions for 1 to 3 years old*. See also [Introduction to Solids](#) and [How Much Should My Toddler Eat?](#) for the number of daily servings for each food group.

Offer Child Size Portions:

- Offer 1/4 to 1/2 of adult portions
- For ages 1-3 the portion size for bread would be a fourth of a slice.
- Meat serving size for the 1-3 year old: 1-2 Tbsp
- Egg portion: 1/4 egg
- Cooked dried beans: 1-2 Tbsp.
- Pasta, rice, potatoes: 1-2 Tbsp.
- Vegetables: 1-2 Tbsp.
- Fruit: 1-2 Tbsp. or 1/4 piece
- Milk or yogurt: 1/4 - 1/3 cup
- Fats and oils: to taste
- Sugars and sweets: each teaspoon of sugar gives about 20 calories. Read labels for added sugar as it can add up quickly. For a 1200 to 1800 calorie intake, sugar should be limited to 6 to 9 teaspoons respectively.
- Recommended Reading: "Child of Mine-Eating with Love and Good Sense" by Ellyn Satter*.

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