

Simple Feeding Strategies



Tackling Picky Eating

We all hope for that joyful eater that loves to eat whatever you put in front of them. Most of the time we get that until our kiddo is about two. However, some situations can make feeding challenges start earlier or persist. As children become more independent they can become more selective in their eating habits without the proper structure and support.

Common characteristics of picky/selective eaters:

- Struggle with new foods
- Narrow variety of foods
- Difficult to please at mealtimes

First, know that feeding and managing challenging behaviors is rough for all of us at various times in a child's development. It's especially true when kids are starting to make their own decisions - that new found freedom and an immature brain that isn't focused on health can lead to poor food choices. This is when caregivers need to provide structure and choices that demonstrate all foods can fit. Certain situations and responses from us can make navigating this time more difficult.

You did your best and together we can make this better!

What can make eating more challenging:

- Health issues (ex. anemia, prediabetes, eating disorders, digestive issues like IBS or chronic constipation)
- Authoritarian parenting style (ex. You can't leave table until you eat it OR it'll be back at your next meal/snack)
- Weight concerns (ex. underweight or overweight)
- Parent/caregiver role-modeling of dieting, poor body image, and health focused talk
- Different rules/expectations for each family member
- Sensory and tactile barriers

What does a 14-18 year old actually need?



Carbs

130g or more daily
Their growth and activities cause them to burn energy fast. Carbs are the most accessible form of energy. More than **50% of their needs** are made up of carbs.



Protein

46-52g per day



Fiber

25-30g per day



Water

6-11 cups per day
Make it accessible
Urine tells you if they need more or less water.
Remember water is in food too.

Overall, they Need **Calories (Energy)**

Support them in eating as much as they need to **feel full**.

Focus on structure, selection, and **NO pressure**.

Keep in mind that physical activity will increase their needs.

This handout provides general nutrition information and is not intended to replace individualized medical or nutrition advice. Please consult your healthcare provider for recommendations specific to your needs.

Start with Exploring Everyone's Role:

How do parents and caregivers support the development of a healthy relationship to food and peaceful mealtimes? Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility is a great tool to check in with how your family is handling feeding.

Parent's Role

- Choose and prepare the food.
- Provide regular meals and snacks.
- Make eating times pleasant.
- Role model how to behave at family mealtime.
- Let your child grow into the body that is right for them.
- Be considerate without catering to likes and dislikes.
- Only water between meal and snack times.

WHAT, WHEN, & HOW

Shared

Incorporate more shared-decision making in what foods are available and when.

Goal is to engage & support them in managing their meal and snacks to arrive to meals hungry.

Kid's Role

- Eat.
- Eat the amount they need.
- Learn to eat the food you enjoy.
- Grow predictably in the way that is right for him.
- Learn to behave well at mealtime
- engage and support meal times

HOW MUCH

Let the structure speak for you - stop pressuring and arguing!

Need more help?
Let's work together

- How do I handle sugar and other snack foods?
- I can't get my child to eat a vegetable.
- My child's weight has been impacted by their eating habits. (underweight or overweight)
- My child eats the same handful of foods no matter what I do.
- My child won't eat if I don't give them their go to foods.
- We've been arguing about food for so long that I don't know where to start.



*Scan to
Get Started*

What you're saying when you're not talking about food..

- Look at what I enjoy by seeing what I eat.
- Go at your own pace when trying new foods.
- Complete meals include all of the items available.
- You don't have to like everything.
- It's okay to like your favorite foods.
- We can talk and laugh during mealtimes.
- You don't have to eat things you don't like to earn foods you do like.
- I trust that you know when you're full and the structure will help you learn to check in with yourself. (Natural consequences are powerful educators)