



Mealtime Strategies for Fussy Eaters

- **Pair new foods with familiar ones.** If your child loves ketchup but isn't sure about broccoli, serve broccoli with a side of ketchup so your child can dip the broccoli.
- **Serve at least one food item at each meal that you know your child likes.**
- **No pressure, except positive peer pressure.** Meal times should be relaxed, pressure free, and include mealtime role-models. Research shows that children are more likely to eat non-preferred and new foods if they see their parents and other children eat them.
- **Give non-preferred foods fun names.** A study tested whether fun names (like "power punch broccoli") made vegetables more appealing to primary school students. Answer: Yes.
- **Value self-feeding, messy is good.** Most people prefer to be in control over what goes in their mouth; let your child feed themselves, and save clean-up for when the meal has ended.
- **Don't give up.** It can take a child 15 to 20 separate meals seeing a new food before being ready to eat the new food; so keep offering non-preferred foods without pressure.
- **Don't measure nutrition by the meal.** Look at what your child eats across a week to help decide if they are eating a balanced diet.
- **Food play is important.** Children need to play with and explore their food to learn how to eat; messy food play is a vital part of the learning process, encourage it!