

Don't Give Up on Your Picky Eater

By Teresa Mills-Faraudo

Many parents cheer and have tears of joys when their kids meet milestones like walking or talking for the first time. But a lot of parents likely do a happy dance when their child eats broccoli for the first time.

That's because so many toddlers and preschoolers push away just about everything their parents try to feed them with the exception of pizza, chicken nuggets and macaroni and cheese.

Don't worry. Eventually they will give asparagus and cauliflower a try. In the meantime, your child most likely won't go hungry. Eating less is normal for children ages 1 to 5 because their growth rate tends to slow down. Toddlers may eat a lot one day and very little the next.

But you shouldn't give in to feeding your kids unhealthy foods just to make them happy, says Michelle Perro, a pediatrician at the Institute for Health and Healing at Sutter Health. "In other countries where food choices are limited, there are far fewer picky eaters."

If a child is healthy and meeting his growth targets, it's okay if he skips a meal because he doesn't want to

eat what you serve him, Perro says. In fact, some kids only need to eat two meals a day.

So why are kids so selective about what they eat? Perro says they have more taste sensations than adults and have issues with food textures.

The key is to keep reintroducing different healthy foods to your child, she says, and eventually she may gobble them up like a pepperoni pizza. It usually takes 10 times of feeding something to children before they get used to it, Perro says.

"Avoid the temptation of putting out things with a lot of carbs and sugar just to get them to eat something," she says. "There's no food value."

Instead, put out a plate with a variety of fruits and vegetables. Parents should also practice healthy eating themselves as well. "Eat organic foods. Avoid processed foods," Perro says. "When parents buy into something, kids will eventually follow."

And don't turn the dinner table into a battleground if your child continues to push away his food, she says. Just let it go – eventually he will try different things.

Getting kids involved in the process of

Tips for Fussy Eaters

- **Don't force a meal or snack.** Your child will eat when she is hungry. Don't turn it into a power struggle.
- **Be patient.** Sometimes it takes at least 10 tries before a child gets used to a food. She may even put it in her mouth and spit it out several times before actually chewing it up and swallowing.
- **Have a meal routine.** Serve meals and snacks at the same times daily.
- **Limit liquids.** Have children drink water with snacks and other drinks, such as milk, with meals.
- **Get the child involved.** Let your child help select healthy fruits, vegetables and meats for the meal at the grocery store. If he is old enough, let him help prepare the meal.
- **Grow a garden.** When kids get involved in growing food, they often take an interest in eating it.
- **Set an example.** Eat a lot of healthy foods, and your kids will eventually follow.
- **Turn off the TV.** Minimizing distractions often helps kids focus on eating.
- **Don't offer rewards.** Your child will expect a sugary treat every time she eats something healthy.
- **Don't prepare separate meals.** Making a separate meal for your child after she rejects what you prepared only encourages picky eating. Ask your child to stay at the table during mealtime even if she doesn't eat. If you are worried that picky eating is affecting your child's growth and development, talk to your doctor.

choosing and cooking food goes a long way, says Gary Appelsies, founder and director of Healthy Plate, an organization that educates kids on the importance of eating healthy.

"I think the biggest thing is letting your kids play with their food," he says. "Take them into the kitchen and let them make something. Let them be artistic. Take them to the store and say, 'You choose what we're going to eat,' and shop the perimeter of the store like the produce section."

Sometimes, you can make a kid-friendly food healthy. Appelsies suggest, for example, if your child wants a burger, give it to her with a whole-wheat bun and lettuce and tomato.

One of the biggest mistakes parents often make is rewarding kids when they do eat something they are served. "Kids are looking to find their own boundaries," he says. "Giving them a reward every time they eat a carrot is just enhancing the idea of getting rewards."

Appelsies thinks most kids are picky in their own way. "It all has to do with what they see on their plate," he says. "I think if something doesn't look good on their plate or doesn't smell good to them, they don't want to eat it." ■

Teresa Mills-Faraudo is an associate editor at *Bay Area Parent* and a mother of two.

Recipe for Finicky Eaters By Gary Appelsies

Hemp-Crusted Chicken Tenders

Here is an easy dinner idea that always gets eaten by my daughter and her friends: breaded chicken tenders with a twist! I use hemp seeds along with breadcrumbs. The hemp seeds add tons of protein and a nutty flavor.

Hemp is a high protein seed that contains all 20 amino acids including the nine essential amino acids that our bodies do not produce naturally. It has high amounts of fatty acids and fiber, as well as vitamin E and trace minerals. It has a balanced ratio of omega 3 to 6 fat, which

contributes to the general strength of the immune system and good cardiovascular health. Hemp is a rich source of phytonutrients, the disease-protective element of plants, with benefits protecting your immunity, bloodstream, tissues, cells, skin and organs.

Don't worry. You and your kids will not get high! Commercial hemp seed contains very low amounts of THC, which is the property that causes the drug response. Plus, it contains a substance that counteracts THC.

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken tenderloins (about 10-15 tenderloins)
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1/2 cup plain breadcrumbs

- 1/2 cup hemp seeds
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/3 cup fresh grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- 2 teaspoons garlic salt

Put chicken in a large bowl. In a second bowl, mix together yogurt and honey. In a third bowl, combine breadcrumbs, hemp seeds, salt, cheese and garlic salt.

Dip chicken tenders into yogurt to coat and then into hemp-seed mixture and coat completely.

Arrange on a well-oiled baking sheet or baking sheet sprayed with cooking spray.

Bake at 350 degrees for 30-40 minutes or until chicken is cooked through, turning once during cooking.

Serve with your favorite dipping sauces.

Gary Appelsies is founder and director of Healthy Plate, an organization that educates kids on the importance of eating healthy.

