

# PICKY EATER ADVICE FROM OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST: SUSAN ROBERTS, MDIV, OTR/L



## DO:

- sit with your child any time they eat. Food and eating have been about sharing comfort throughout history. Children who eat with their parents get better grades, have less teen pregnancy, drug use, and eating disorders.
- provide at least ONE food you know your child likes and serve enough for them to fill up if they choose to eat only that one food. I know this means they may only eat crackers or bread for a while, but eventually they will try other foods IF you let them explore at their own pace and provide plenty of other choices.
- take control of the menu. That's your job as the adult/parent. At every meal or snack they need a protein, fat, and carbohydrate (in the form of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains).

## DON'T:

- ask your child to eat, taste, or try foods. In fact, stop talking about food at all. Let your child explore foods on his or her own terms and at his or her own pace. This means looking, touching, smelling, tasting, and refusing. This may seem counter-intuitive, but research shows that healthy eating habits come when children have control over what they put in their mouth.
- cater to picky eating behaviors -it just prolongs that behavior chain. If a child says they don't like a food -keep serving it on a regular basis. Help them reframe by saying, "It's ok to say you don't want that, right now." Serve what the family enjoys and let the child accommodate to the family's tastes.

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“Most adults, including professionals, focus entirely on what we want children to do – dress themselves, eat healthy foods, and get good grades. Children are literally starving for PLAY, the primary occupation of childhood. Until we feed children's needs for play we cannot change the way they eat.” -Susan Roberts