



Offer a Variety of Foods

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Does it seem like your child only likes a few different foods? You play an important role in helping your child learn about food. You are responsible for providing a variety of healthy foods for your child to eat.

Offering different types of food helps young children get the nutrients they need from each of the five food groups. They will also be more likely to try new foods and to like more foods. When children develop a taste for many types of foods, it's much easier to plan family meals.

Many children are hesitant to try new foods. It is completely normal for young kids to reject foods they have never tried before. Be patient and keep trying.

Tips for Offering a Variety of Foods:

1. **Mix it up.** Try something new with your family. Here are just a few ideas: fresh pineapple, red bell peppers, Greek yogurt, canned salmon, or a whole wheat pita with hummus.
2. **Let your child chose a new vegetable.** Serve it raw with ranch dressing or other dip, add it to a soup, salad or casserole or serve it as a side with a meal.
3. **Add different ingredients to salads or sandwiches.** Try adding mango, snap peas or tuna to your green salad. Add thinly sliced cucumber, avocado or apples to a sandwich.
4. **Go with the grains.** Vary the grain foods you buy week to week – from different types of bread, cereals and pasta to tortillas, quinoa or rice.
5. **Fruit it up.** Add fruit such as blueberries, peaches or bananas to your child's breakfast by using it to top cold or hot cereal. Buy different types of fresh, canned, dried or frozen fruit.
6. **Keep them visible.** Place rinsed and cut fruits and vegetables, in a bag or bowl, on a shelf in your refrigerator along with string cheese or cheese cubes – right where your child can see them.

Sources:

1. *Kid Friendly Veggies and Fruits*, USDA's MyPlate: <https://bit.ly/2o0mohF>
2. *Build Healthy Mealtime Habits* USDA's MyPlate: <https://bit.ly/2nxMDan>

Strawberry Chocolate Bites

- ¼ cup diced fresh strawberries
- 2 Tbsp low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 2 squares chocolate graham crackers

1. Spread yogurt on graham crackers.
2. Top with strawberries. Enjoy!

Makes 1 serving. Each serving contains 99 calories, 2 g fat, 18 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 92 mg sodium.

Cook's notes: Feel free to use any type of fresh or canned fruit in place of the strawberries. Greek yogurt works well because of its added thickness.

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For more information check out Food Fun for Young Children:

<https://go.unl.edu/foodfunchildren>

