

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Toddlers (2-3 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Skills such as taking turns, playing make believe, and kicking a ball, are called developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (like jumping, running, or balancing).

Because of children's growing desire to be independent, this stage is often called the "terrible twos." However, this can be an exciting time for parents and toddlers. Toddlers will experience huge thinking, learning, social, and emotional changes that will help them to explore their new world, and make sense of it. During this stage, toddlers should be able to follow two- or three-step directions, sort objects by shape and color, imitate the actions of adults and playmates, and express a wide range of emotions.

For more details on developmental milestones, warning signs of possible developmental delays, and information on how to help your child's development, visit the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign website.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your toddler during this time:

- Set up a special time to read books with your toddler.
- Encourage your child to take part in pretend play.
- Play parade or follow the leader with your toddler.
- Help your child to explore things around her by taking her on a walk or wagon ride.
- Encourage your child to tell you his name and age.
- Teach your child simple songs like Itsy Bitsy Spider, or other cultural childhood rhymes.
- Give your child attention and praise when she follows instructions and shows positive behavior and limit attention for defiant behavior like tantrums. Teach your child acceptable ways to show that she's upset.



Child Safety First

Because your child is moving around more, he will come across more dangers as well. Dangerous situations can happen quickly, so keep a close eye on your child. Here are a few tips to help keep your growing toddler safe:

- Do NOT leave your toddler near or around water (for example, bathtubs, pools, ponds, lakes, whirlpools, or the ocean) without someone watching her. Fence off backyard pools. Drowning is the leading cause of injury and death among this age group.
- Encourage your toddler to sit when eating and to chew his food thoroughly to prevent choking.
- Check toys often for loose or broken parts.
- Encourage your toddler not to put pencils or crayons in her mouth when coloring or drawing.
- Do NOT hold hot drinks while your child is sitting on your lap. Sudden movements can cause a spill and might result in your child's being burned.
- Make sure that your child sits in the back seat and is buckled up properly in a car seat with a harness.

Healthy Bodies

- Talk with staff at your child care provider to see if they serve healthier foods and drinks, and if they limit television and other screen time.
- Your toddler might change what food she likes from day to day. It's normal behavior, and it's best not to make an issue of it. Encourage her to try new foods by offering her small bites to taste.
- Keep television sets out of your child's bedroom. Limit screen time, including video and electronic games, to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day.
- Encourage free play as much as possible. It helps your toddler stay active and strong and helps him develop motor skills.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/toddlers2.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>



Bright Futures Parent Handout

2½ Year Visit

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to your family.

LANGUAGE PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Learning to Talk and Communicate

- Limit TV and videos to no more than 1–2 hours each day.
- Be aware of what your child is watching on TV.
- Read books together every day. Reading aloud will help your child get ready for preschool. Take your child to the library and story times.
- Give your child extra time to answer questions.
- Listen to your child carefully and repeat what is said using correct grammar.

PRESCHOOL CONSIDERATIONS

Getting Ready for Preschool

- Make toilet-training easier.
 - Dress your child in clothing that can easily be removed.
 - Place your child on the toilet every 1–2 hours.
 - Praise your child when she is successful.
- Try to develop a potty routine.
- Create a relaxed environment by reading or singing on the potty.
- Think about preschool or Head Start for your child.
- Join a playgroup or make playdates.

FAMILY ROUTINES

Family Routines

- Get in the habit of reading at least once each day.
- Your child may ask to read the same book again and again.
- Visit zoos, museums, and other places that help your child learn.
- Enjoy meals together as a family.
- Have quiet pre-bedtime and bedtime routines.
- Be active together as a family.
- Your family should agree on how to best prepare for your growing child.
 - All family members should have the same rules.

SAFETY

Safety

- Be sure that the car safety seat is correctly installed in the back seat of all vehicles.
- Never leave your child alone inside or outside your home, especially near cars
- Limit time in the sun. Put a hat and sunscreen on the child before he goes outside.
- Teach your child to ask if it is OK to pet a dog or other animal before touching it.
- Be sure your child wears an approved safety helmet when riding trikes or in a seat on adult bikes.
- Watch your child around grills or open fires. Place a barrier around open fires, fire pits, or campfires. Put matches well out of sight and reach.
- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and test monthly. It is best to use smoke detectors that use long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries every year.
- Make an emergency fire escape plan.

SAFETY

Water Safety

- Watch your child constantly whenever he is near water including buckets, play pools, and the toilet. An adult should be within arm's reach at all times when your child is in or near water.
- Empty buckets, play pools, and tubs right after use.
- Check that pools have 4-sided fences with self-closing latches.

PROMOTING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Getting Along With Others

- Give your child chances to play with other toddlers.
- Have 2 of her favorite toys or have friends buy the same toys to avoid battles.
- Give your child choices between 2 good things in snacks, books, or toys.
- Follow daily routines for eating, sleeping, and playing.

What to Expect at Your Child's 3 Year Visit

We will talk about

- Reading and talking
- Rules and good behavior
- Staying active as a family
- Safety inside and outside
- Playing with other children

Poison Help: 1-800-222-1222

Child safety seat inspection:
1-866-SEATCHECK; seatcheck.org



American Academy of Pediatrics



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Food For Thought





Expanding Fussy Palates

If you dread mealtimes, you're not alone. Here's the latest and best research on transforming your kid's attitudes about food, as well as your own.

By Catherine Symon

Photographs by Sonya Abrams Photography

Have you ever dejectedly watched someone else's child feast happily on braised kale with a side of sprouted chickpea mousse while your son picks at yet another plate of buttered noodles? Have nightly discussions over how many more bites your daughter needs to eat before she can leave the dinner table turned her into a remarkably skilled negotiator? Do your children insist that they "hate" the food on their plates, even if you know for a fact that they've never tasted, seen, or even heard of it before? If you answered yes to any of these, you may be the parent of a picky eater.

Why do kids become picky eaters?

Picky eating—the perplexing and seemingly random rejection of certain foods—stems from a combination of physical, genetic, and environmental factors; the more factors that are relevant to your child, the pickier he or she will be. Here are a few reasons why most kids become picky eaters at one time or another:

Toddlers and children grow much slower than babies. Picky eating

peaks between the ages of 2 and 6, a time when children aren't growing as fast as they did when they were babies. As family nutrition expert Maryann Jacobsen, MS, RD, notes in *From Powerful to Picky: The Mindset, Strategies and Know-how You Need to Empower Your Picky Eater*, "Birth weight triples in the first year of life but then doesn't quadruple until the second year. Children between age 2 and puberty gain an average of 4.5-6.5 pounds per year." A baby who happily gobbles up everything offered to her will simply eat less often when she becomes a toddler.

Children want independence. As they reach toddlerhood, children start to look for opportunities to make their own decisions and exert some control over their own lives. Saying "no" to everything is one example of how they try to establish a slice of independence. Deciding what to eat and what not to eat is another.

"Supertasters" find some flavors overwhelming. According to the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, about 25 percent of the population are "supertasters," people who

experience taste more intensely and consequently dislike certain foods because they have higher concentrations of taste buds on their tongues. People with this genetic sensitivity tend to avoid bitter foods, and therefore green leafy vegetables which, to them, taste unbearably bitter.

Children with cautious temperaments will be cautious about food. Those who are flexible and sociable tend to be more open minded about trying new foods than children who are cautious or slow to warm.

Negative eating experiences make children more guarded around some foods. Children who have choked, had reflux, or experienced allergic or food sensitivity reactions are more likely to reject the foods that either caused the experience or remind them of foods that caused the experience.

Nutrition-minded parents unwittingly encourage pickiness. It's true. Most of us are well-versed on nutrition, but not knowledgeable about feeding (at least not past the infant stage). We goad, bargain, reason, berate, guilt, bribe, and plead at meal time to get a few more grams of protein or another serving of calcium down the hatch. Needless to say, children eat less if we try to get them to eat more (and vice versa).

Tips for handling picky eating

Picky eating is both normal and manageable. Here are some practical tips for making peace with the picky eater in your life.

Understand that competent eating is a learned skill. Eating seems intuitive—after all, newborns have built-in rooting reflexes that help them eat—so picky eating is mistakenly viewed as problem behavior. But rooting reflexes disappear by 6 months and a child needs time and practice to master the motor and executive skills required to become a competent eater. During this (lengthy) process, it is normal for the child to balk at foods that are challenging to her. As Maryann Jacobsen writes, changing your mindset from “picky eating is a problem” to “picky eating is just how kids eat” can help you be more patient and understanding when there's a picky eater in your family.

Follow the Division of Responsibility (DoR). If there is one thing you can do to diffuse tensions around meal times and help your child (eventually) eat a wider variety of foods, it is what dietitian, family therapist, and feeding expert Ellyn Satter, MS, RD, LCSW, BCD, calls the “Division of Responsibility”: the adult decides what, where, and when the child eats, while the child decides how much or even if she will eat. You feed, they eat. Sticking to your responsibility means never coaxing, encouraging, and certainly not pressuring a child to eat anything. In her book *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense*, Satter boils it down to this: “[T]he way to get a kid to eat is not to try.”

Serve family-style meals whenever possible (the “what” of the DoR): Provide lots of options and let your child serve himself so he

PICKY EATING VS PROBLEM EATING

Picky eating can cause a lot of stress, but as long as the child is growing well, it is normal and can be managed with good feeding habits. Problem eating, on the other hand, negatively impacts growth and can be a symptom of an underlying issue. If you suspect your child is a problem eater, consult with a pediatrician or feeding expert. Here are a few potential signs of problem eating:

- Unable to take pureed food by 10 months
- Unable to take finger foods by 12 months
- Not drinking from a cup by 16 months
- Ongoing poor weight gain
- Eats fewer than 20 foods total
- Coughs, gags, or chokes during meals
- Ongoing problems with vomiting
- Cries or has a tantrum in the presence of food
- Refuses all foods with a specific texture or entire food groups
- Almost always eats different food than the rest of the family
- Requires many more exposures to eat a new food than picky eaters
- Worries about being able to eat away from home

Sources: Kay Toomey, PhD (STAR Institute for Sensory Processing Disorder), Ellyn Satter, MS, RD, CICSW, BCD (Ellyn Satter Institute); Maryann Jacobsen, MS, RD (From *Picky to Powerful*)



gets to choose the foods he feels ready to eat. When you first start practicing DoR, be sure to serve at least one food that your child already likes to eat so he feels included in the meal. Yes, that may mean that he only eats rice or bread or mac 'n' cheese for the first few meals. That's OK. As he gains confidence and familiarity he will start to try other foods. Serve enough so that everyone at the table has the opportunity to eat until pleasantly full.

Set eating time zones that work for your family (the "when" of the DoR). Children typically need three meals plus one to three snacks. Eating time zones make meal time predictable, but also allow your child to get a little hungry between eating times so she is more likely to eat what is served. Children don't have to eat at exactly the same time every day (for example, if you set the breakfast zone for 7:30 to 9 a.m., the meal can happen any time in that window), so give yourself flexibility based on your child's natural hunger patterns and your family's schedule. But stick to the time zones; no grazing for food or drinks (other than water) between meal and snack times!

Insist on having everyone sit together for meals (the "where" of the DoR). Kids learn to become good companions at meals by sitting at the table, passing food to others, practicing good table manners, and engaging in conversation. If your child isn't ready to sit for an entire meal it's fine to let him take a break or finish early, just make sure all eating happens at the table.

Serve the foods you enjoy eating. In *It's Not About the Broccoli: Three Habits to Teach Your Kids for a Lifetime of Healthy Eating*, sociologist Dina Rose, PhD, encourages parents to focus on the long-term by thinking about what they are teaching their child to crave when they serve "kid-friendly" foods

instead of real food. She writes: "[E]very chicken nugget makes roasted chicken a harder sell. That's because the salty, crunchy chicken nuggets not only train our children's taste buds to want more salty, crunchy chicken nuggets, but also make roasted chicken seem dull and strangely chewy in comparison." Also, don't assume that picky eaters only want bland, white food. Serve real, fresh food that you enjoy eating.

Serve the occasional treat. Avoiding treats or labeling them as "bad" only serves to make forbidden foods something to be sought after and consumed in mass quantities when mom isn't looking. Take the mystique out of these foods and show your child the right balance between healthful and treat foods by including them in the occasional meal at home.

Let your child determine when she is full. At some meals your child will take two bites and announce she is done with dinner. That's OK,

let her be done. Pushing her to have "one more bite" or "at least" finish her vegetables overrides her natural feeling of satiety and is linked with obesity and being overweight.

Be patient, stay neutral, and trust your child will get there. A few weeks into practicing DoR you may feel deflated if your

Changing your mindset from "picky eating is a problem" to "picky eating is just how kids eat" can help you be more patient and understanding.

child still says "YUCK! I don't like that" about the delicious dish you served. Remember that unfamiliar foods are intimidating and even scary for some kids (researchers call it food neophobia) and when your child says, "I don't like that" what he probably means is, "I'm not ready to try it yet." In *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*, Ellyn Satter explains that children need 10 to 20 neutral exposures to a given food before they are ready to eat it: "Neutral exposure means it shows up on the table again and again, with no pushing or prodding, no persuading or cheerleading, no bribes or nutrition lessons, and no little lectures about starving children anywhere." A picky child may also need to smell, touch, squash, smear, stab, and lick the food multiple times before they are ready to actually consume it. Whether your child ends up needing 60 exposures to dig into a new dish or only six, trust them to accept foods at their own pace, just as they learn to walk, talk, and read when they are physically, emotionally, and mentally ready. ❖

Catherine is a medical writer and omnivore. She is the mother of a picky eater who is slo-o-owly and cautiously choosing to try new foods.



ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

Fearless Feeding: How to Raise Healthy Eaters from High Chair to High School by Jill Castle and Maryann Jacobsen; SOSapproach-conferences.com (Toomey & Associates); EllynSatterInstitute.org; National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)

The World on a Plate

As the world becomes smaller, being able to relate to people culturally different from ourselves is a critical skill to teach our kids

By Shaheen Bilgrami

Photographs by Petra Cross Photography



When I moved to San Francisco from the UK, I was excited to meet people with interesting and different cultural and culinary backgrounds. New friends exposed me to new cuisines—South and Central American food, Burmese food, regional cuisines from the United States. Once I became a mom to a child extremely wary of new foods, I found myself trying to think of innovative ways to make her more interested in the bounty that surrounds us. I wanted to ensure she had a healthy appreciation of her Indian and French heritage, and I wanted to pass on my love of food itself. By connecting food with cultural education, my daughter became much more interested and engaged and willing to try, taste and experience new things.

I spoke to a number of fellow GGMG moms and food experts who agree that this immersive, multi-sensory experience appeals to the naturally curious mind of children. Stacie Dong, co-founder of the A Little Yumminess blog and cooking school, met her co-founder, Simran Singh, when their children were in the baby and toddler years. Coming from different cultural and culinary backgrounds, they bonded over a shared passion for food, leading them on many gastronomic adventures with their children throughout San Francisco. Their blog and cookery school came about because so many friends started asking them to recommend interesting food finds and fun foodie places to go with kids. Stacie says that the great thing about food as a medium to teach children about different cultures is that “it’s hands on, accessible, and it’s good for any age.”

Vanessa Silver and Janine Gee, co-founder and program director of Culinary Artistas, also utilize the link between food and culture in their programs. In fact, Culinary Artistas recently hosted a series of summer cooking classes under the banner of Around the World

Cooking. Read on for some tips, tricks, and activities for kids of all ages (and their moms).

Read all about it

Expose your children to books that include interesting foods and be inspired to buy and taste the foods mentioned after reading about them. The World Snacks board book series by Amy Wilson Sanger are particularly good for babies and toddlers. Topics are global, from *Chaat and Sweets* (Indian) to *Let's Nosh* (Jewish) to *Yum Yum Dim Sum* (Chinese).

For preschoolers, select picture books that feature a particular food, such as *Dragons Love Tacos* by Adam Rubin, *Bee-Bim Bop!* by Linda Sue Park, *Cora Cooks Pancit* by Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore, or *Round Is a Tortilla and Noodle Magic* by Roseanne Thong. After reading together, cook the featured food or sample it at a restaurant. Use the holidays—any holiday—to broaden your search for new and interesting foods you might not otherwise encounter, especially for holidays you don't typically celebrate.

Stacie also suggests that the simple act of looking at international cookbooks with kids can be a fun activity. Let them pick out what dishes look yummy and guess what they contain. Older kids can select recipes they like the look of and think about the ingredients required to make them. Is it possible to cook this at home? What ingredients do we need to buy?

To set yourself up for success, really think about what you want your kid to get out of the experience and consider different ways of achieving this.

I also discovered the fantastic series of picture books by Norah Dooley, which includes *Everybody Cooks Rice*, *Everybody Bakes Bread*, *Everybody Serves Soup*, and *Everybody Brings Noodles*. These stories function as the perfect starting point to investigate foods that are common to multiple cultures. For example, select breads from different countries and compare and contrast each kind as you think about the cultures that eat them. What dishes are they served with? How does the climate of the bread's origin affect its appearance or taste?



Cook up a storm

Invite your baby or toddler to investigate some of the ingredients you are using to cook an international dish. Set up sensory plates with ingredients to explore. Encourage them to use their senses to touch, look, smell, and if appropriate, taste what is presented to them. You can also do this while out and about, shopping for produce.

Cooking international foods with your kid has the potential to be a culturally rich educational activity. If you are not that

comfortable in the kitchen and/or have limited time, Janine recommends that you try to commit yourself to cooking one international meal per month. Get your children involved in choosing recipes and explore ingredients and learn a little about the country of origin. You can tailor the activity by complexity according to the time you have and your child's age and ability.

Have realistic expectations out of the activity. Think in advance of your child's level of understanding and their staying power. Be realistic about their practical skills, and make

sure that they are able to do the jobs you designate to them. (If the idea of cooking sends a shiver up your spine, or if you just don't have time, there are a number of great cooking classes and camps available in our beloved city, such as Culinary Artistas and a Little Yumminess.)

Spice it up

Try spice painting with your littlest tots. Select a variety of vibrantly colored ground spices, place a small amount into individual wells of a plastic egg carton and add a few drops of water to make "spice paint." Let your toddler use this to paint fragrant pictures using a brush or his fingers. This activity definitely needs close supervision—avoid burning spices such as cayenne pepper and make sure you thoroughly wash everyone's hands afterwards.

Invite your older kids to look at spice blends and to explore the individual spices that have gone into them by touching, smelling, and tasting them. Encourage them to compare the difference in taste after grinding and/or roasting them. Once they become familiar with individual spices, you can see if they can identify the ingredients of ready-made spice blends. You can also explore the geographical and historical reasons for certain spices being used in certain cuisines.



Planting a garden of herbs that flavor your favorite ethnic foods is another wonderful activity for green-thumbed kids. Your kids can try growing herbs from seeds or start with small plants. Easy-to-tend herbs include chives, mint, parsley, basil, cilantro, thyme, and lemongrass. They can even plant a themed herb garden, such as a “pizza garden” in which they grow basil, parsley, and oregano.

Explore the amazing SF food world

Kids love to see how food is made. Stacie suggests tasting and discussing individual ethnic foods such as tofu, tortillas, tamales, and dumplings with your kids and asking them to guess how they might be made. Then see them made in person! The Hodo Soy Beanery in Oakland has a tofu factory tour. You can watch tortillas and tamales being made at La Palma Mexicatessen in the Mission. Several restaurants on Clement Street in Outer Richmond have dumpling makers at work near the front windows of the stores.

Explore your local ethnic neighborhoods to find what’s offered. Local markets in Japantown, Richmond, the Mission, and beyond are a treasure trove for the curious foodie. Stacie gets her kids to each select a snack and/or an interesting fruit or vegetable to buy and try. She says “it’s a great way to spark conversation and to be curious [with

your child].”

One way to tempt a picky eater is to select a food that your child likes and find international or different versions of it. For example, if your kid loves pancakes, maybe she’ll be willing to try French crepes, Danish ebelskivers, Indian dosas, Japanese okonomiyaki, or Eastern European blinis, to name a few. Get older kids to think about ingredients used in different places and consider why these ingredients are used. Alternatively, select a favorite raw ingredient, such as an avocado, and explore the different cuisines in which it is eaten. Investigate this further with your child in an age-appropriate way. Are there any geographic links between the countries where it is eaten? Similar climates?

Many local churches host cultural food festivals. Vanessa says these offer a good opportunity to see food in context. Look out for events hosted by Middle Eastern, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian church communities in the city and beyond.

Ready, get set, eat!

To set yourself up for success, really think about what you want your kid to get out of the experience and consider different ways of achieving this. Give yourself extra time to

introduce the cultural elements into the activity. For example, if you’re cooking international food, make sure you put aside time to talk and give your kid the time to ask questions, rather than try to talk to your kids at the same time as hurrying to get your meal made.

Do not expect your child to taste everything that is being prepared or being offered to them while out and about, but encourage him to keep an open mind and not to insult another person’s food choice. The phrase used for this at A Little Yumminess is “Don’t yuck my yum!” Culinary Artistas expect children who are enrolled in their classes to take part in the cooking activities, but they do not push children to taste the fruits of their labor unless they want to.

Food exploration is a natural and fun part of childhood. Harnessing this interest to give your child a taste of cultures beyond their own, through play, food preparation, and investigation, can be fulfilling, educational, and lots of fun for both parent and child. ❖

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If you liked this piece, read about six San Francisco Fun Foodie Field Trips that you can take with your kid at www.gmg.org/blog