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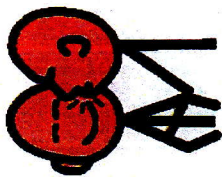
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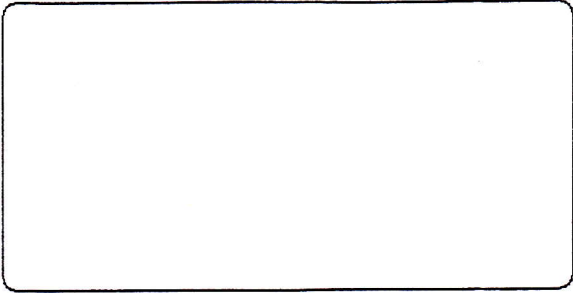
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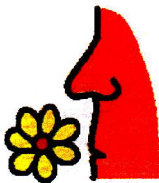
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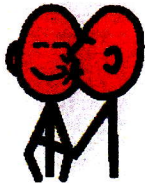
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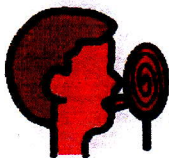
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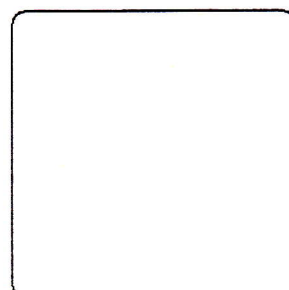
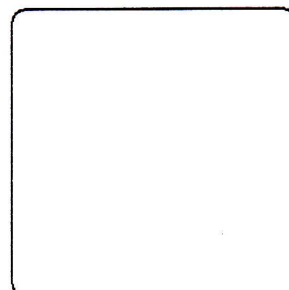
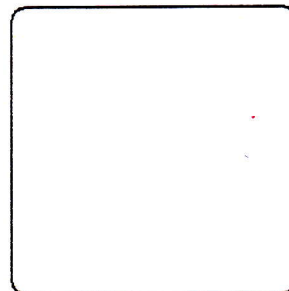
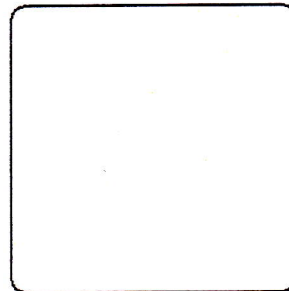
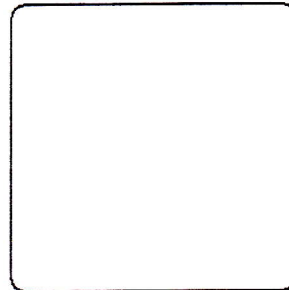
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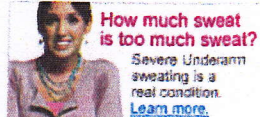
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## Kids' Health



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### How to Get Picky Eaters to Try New Foods

With a little patience and some tried-and-true tips, you can coax toddlers into a world of healthy food.

By Lynn Yoffee

Medically reviewed by [Pat F. Bass III, MD, MPH](#)

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Almost every family has a story to tell about toddlers and their eating discoveries and habits. Some children are happy to try new things, while others make mealtime a major challenge for their parents by refusing to stray beyond the few foods they'll allow to touch their plates. If you have a toddler who falls into the picky eaters category, don't despair — there are some strategies you can try to broaden his food boundaries.



"A lot of time it has to do with what the [parents](#) or caregivers are feeding the toddlers when they started eating solid food," says Samantha Heller, MS, RD, former senior clinical nutritionist at New York University Langone Medical Center's Outpatient Cardiac Rehabilitation & Prevention Nutrition program and host of a live nutrition show on Sirius Satellite's new station DOCTOR Radio.

"For example, the Gerber Feeding Infants and Toddlers survey found that the vegetable most consumed by little ones was

french fries," Heller says. "That is about the time when children's taste preferences begin to develop. Giving toddlers who are 1 to 3 years old cookies, hot dogs, french fries, and other junk food can create taste preferences for those foods that are high-salt, high-fat, and high-sugar."

Heller explains that babies are born with a taste for sweet things because breast milk is sweet. Over time, the taste for bitter or sour develops. Broccoli may be too strong for a 2-year-old toddler, but it depends on the parents too.

"Worldwide, children in China grow up having vegetables and rice, fish, or tofu for breakfast and they don't feel deprived that they don't get sugar-frosted, honey-dipped cereal," Heller says.

"Children in India eat curry from a very young age. Think internationally."

#### Expose Toddlers to a Variety of Foods

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Heller says that it's best to introduce a variety of foods as soon as a **toddler** starts eating solid food. Getting a toddler to try the new foods doesn't have to be a war either.

"One thing to remember is that unless we have interfered by giving toddlers junk and pushing them to eat when they're not hungry, they are good at regulating their intake. Sometimes you have to let the picky eater be picky. It may take 10 to 15 exposures to a new food for a child to try it."

#### Tips and Tricks for Feeding Picky Eaters

Here are some positive ways to get your toddler to give **healthy foods** a try, as suggested by Heller and the American Academy of Pediatrics:

**Don't make a big deal out of healthy food.**

**Allow your toddler to help choose healthy foods.** Give him three options and allow him to choose one.

**Make fun shapes and forms with food.** Vegetables can be easily arranged into a clown face, for example.

**Let kids dip.** Use spreads like cottage cheese, peanut butter, or low-fat salad dressings with vegetables and fruits.

**Never make eating a punishment.** For example, don't tell a toddler he can't have dessert until he finishes his meal.

**Set a good example.** "You can't have parents eating unhealthy food and then expect the toddler to eat something different. They'll notice and wonder why," Heller says.

**Avoid juices, sweetened drinks, or snacks too close to mealtime.**

**Get over a food jag.** If your child likes only one food, meal after meal (known as food jags), let him have it. But be sure to offer other foods at every meal before that favorite food is presented. Food jags don't cause harm and typically don't last very long.

**If your child goes on an eating strike, let it happen.** Set limits, be supportive, and don't be scared to let your toddler go hungry.

**Give new foods a try.** Put a small portion of a new type of food on the toddler's plate. She doesn't have to eat it, but keep putting it on her plate so that she becomes more familiar with

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