

6 tips for helping young children try new foods

Healthy eating habits start early—and they don't have to be complicated. When introducing new foods to babies, toddlers or preschoolers, small steps and patience go a long way.

These six evidence-based tips help you support your child's nutrition in positive, low-pressure ways that build curiosity and lifelong healthy habits.



Scan for more information, services and resources.



TIP 1 Start Small

Start small when introducing new foods. Research shows even tiny tastes help children adjust to unfamiliar flavors over time. One bite or even a lick is progress.

TIP 2 Keep Trying

It can take 10–15 tries or more before a child accepts a new food. Stay consistent and don't worry if they resist at first. Repeated exposure builds familiarity and confidence.

TIP 3 Make It Fun

Kids are more willing to try new foods when mealtime is creative and playful. Cut foods into fun shapes, use colorful plates or have a living-room “picnic.”

TIP 4 Encourage Exploration

Encourage your child to smell, touch and squish foods to help them feel comfortable and independent. Squishing foods is often the safest method while the esophagus is developing, reducing choking risk.

TIP 5 Involve Them in the Process

Kids are more likely to try foods they help pick or prepare. Involving them in meal prep builds excitement and a sense of ownership.

TIP 6 Avoid Pressure

Avoid bribing or pressuring kids to eat, studies show it backfires. Stay calm, offer a variety of foods and model healthy habits.