

Holiday Eating for the Picky Eater

Holidays are a time for family and friends, celebrations, and tasty food. What happens when your child finds the food anything but 'tasty'? Here are some basic strategies for surviving the holidays with a child who has a restricted variety of food that they're willing to eat:

1. When going to a potluck style party, make the dish you bring something that your child consistently eats at home (ex. rolls, plain chicken, sparkling cider, etc.).
2. Consider feeding your child their meal before heading to the party and/or bringing a snack along for them to have during the event.
3. If well-intentioned family members begin to give their opinion on how best to help your child, politely ask them to 'follow your lead'. (If you anticipate this happening, think about speaking with them before the meal if it feels appropriate.)
4. Allow your child to take a break before, after, or even during a meal. Incorporate some calming activities and help them get their wiggles out before heading back in to be with the group.
5. Try to keep the focus on spending time with loved ones and not on the actual food. This is likely not the ideal time to attempt to expand your child's food repertoire.

Red flags for feeding challenges.

If you answer 'yes' to some of the red flags listed at right, it's possible that your child may be struggling with the complex but essential task of eating. If your child is experiencing any of these



difficulties, please discuss your concerns with a pediatrician.

- Only willing to consistently eat fewer than 20 foods
- Typically unwilling to try new foods
- Seems to prefer foods with a single texture (ex. smooth yogurt, goldfish) instead of mixed textures (ex. yogurt with chunks of fruit, casseroles)
- Rigid about the color, brand, shape, or presentation of a food
- Difficulty with different temperatures of food
- Often gags or throws up in response to food interactions (ex. smell, touch, taste, etc.)
- History of a choking episode or other traumatic event related to food
- Tends to graze all day on snack foods and is unwilling to eat meals
- Chooses to go hungry instead of eating a food they do not like or do not want to try
- Difficulty gaining weight