



Responsive Feeding

What is responsive feeding?

Responsive feeding is an approach that says it is the parent's job to offer a variety of healthy foods in age-appropriate servings at mealtimes and snacktimes. It is the child's job to decide what and how much to eat. Responsive feeding helps children learn to recognize when they are hungry and when they are full.



Responsive feeding helps children to be aware, understand, and trust their bodies' cues. This understanding helps them build healthy eating skills that last a lifetime.



Expect children to start to say "No" to food

Between the ages of 2 and 7, most children start to refuse foods. This is normal. Children may refuse foods that are prepared differently than they are used to or even foods that they have eaten before, causing parents to think of their children as "picky" eaters.

Read books about food!

Children love having books read to them. Reading to your child can help brain development, improve imagination, and promote a love of learning. Reading books about food can help expose children to new foods.

Check out a few of these titles:

- *Food Faces* by Deanna F. Cook
- *Rah, Rah, Radishes!* by April Pulley Sayre
- *Go, Go, Grapes!* by April Pulley Sayre
- *How are you Peeling?* by Saxton Freymann and Joost Elffers
- *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z* by Lois Ehlert

Ohio AAP PMP Mobile App

Search Parenting at Meal and Playtime on Apple Store or Google Play



App Highlights...

- Physician-endorsed materials for parents to access on-demand
- Resources for parents organized by age
- Text reminders sent monthly and/or for age milestones
- Easy sign-up
- Videos on feeding, play, nutrition and more



More information?

- Infant Nutrition. American Academy of Pediatrics. Healthy Children website. <https://healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/default.aspx>
- Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics: Parenting at Mealtimes and Playtime. <http://ohioaap.org/projects/pmp>



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What parents can do

If your child starts to refuse foods they used to eat or new foods you are offering, don't panic! Here are some Do's and Don'ts to help you and your child:

DOs	DON'Ts
Continue to offer your child a variety of foods, even ones that they have recently refused. It can take a child up to 20 times of being offered a new food to feel comfortable with it.	Force your child to eat. This often results in children eating less and teaches them to ignore their bodily cues of hunger and fullness. This can also create negative feelings about food and mealtimes, which does not make feeding a positive, supportive environment for children or parents.
Let your child see you eat a wide range of foods while sitting at the table together, including fruits, vegetables, and new foods.	Bargain with or nag your child to eat more. Saying things like, "If you finish your food, you can have dessert," or "Just two more bites, and you can have a treat" often results in children learning how to better bargain for what they really want and teaches them to ignore their hunger and fullness cues.
Give kids many chances to experience food without the added pressure to "try" it. This could mean playing with food together (think creating a zoo with animal crackers, making a forest with broccoli, or counting with grape tomatoes). You can also let your child cook with you by washing the fruits and vegetables, stirring the food, or helping you measure and pour. Ask your child to look for a new recipe with you or pick out foods at the grocery store.	Worry about your child being picky. A change in your child's attitude and willingness to eat new foods or even foods the child has eaten for years is very often a normal phase of development. You can always talk to your child's pediatrician if you have any concerns about your child's weight, growth, eating habits, or overall health.
Limit distractions at mealtimes. Turn off any screens (TVs, tablets, phones). Make mealtime a time to engage and connect with your child. Getting rid of distractions also helps you better learn your child's hunger and fullness cues and helps them better recognize their own cues, too.	Only feed your child the foods he/she likes or you know the child will eat. This narrows the feeding options you have at meals and reduces the child's taste preferences to only the foods that are familiar or preferred.

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