OVERCOMING PICKY EATING

If your child is a picky eater you have likely experienced frustration at meal times. Especially if your child insists on eating the same foods over and over again. Picky eating can be a passing phase, but if you consistently give in to your child’s demands it can quickly become a habit. Below are some tips for helping your child overcome picky eating.

Tips for helping picky eaters:

1. Do not prepare separate meals for your child from what the family is eating. Try to include at least one or two items you know your child will eat at each meal along with a new food you want your child to try.

2. Do not use food as a reward or punishment. As tempting as it might be, do not use ice cream, candy, or other treats as a reward for eating vegetables, fruits, or other foods your child does not want. This reinforces to the child that these foods are less desirable.

3. Set small goals – encourage your child to take at least two bites from all of the foods on the plate, but do not require your child to clean his/her plate. This demonstrates the importance of trying different foods without overwhelming your child with feeling they have to eat it all. To help with this, serve your child small portions on child-sized plates.

4. Involve your child in shopping and meal preparation. Allow your child to select fruits, vegetables, and different types of whole grain breads, pasta shapes, and healthy breakfast cereals. When cooking give your child small tasks such as mixing the salad in the bowl, serving fruit on the plate, and setting the table.

5. Allow your child choice, but control the choices they have. For example, offer your child the choice of having green beans or broccoli for dinner – your child will feel in control of making the selection and you have succeeded in including a vegetable with the meal.

6. Consider topping new items with a healthy dip or condiment your child knows and likes, such as low-fat ranch, yogurt, shredded cheese, honey mustard, or catsup.

7. Stay positive at meal times and do not turn the dinner table into a battleground. Talk about the different foods on the plates and why they are healthy. Avoid begging your child to eat. Allow your child to decide when he/she is full, and avoid fixing a snack for the child immediately after the meal is over.

8. Be patient and don’t give up! It may take 10-15 tries for your child to accept a new food. Keep providing the new item and encourage your child to try two bites each time.

9. Eat meals together as a family with the TV off. Even if your child chooses not to eat, make sure he/she sits at the table and does not play during the meal.

10. Be a role model! If you are asking your child to eat a variety of foods, make sure that you set a good example as the parent and do the same.

REFERENCES:
United States Department of Agriculture – WICS Works Resource System

ChooseMyPlate.Gov – Picky Eaters
http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers-picky-eating