



# Healthy Living With Head Start

GIVE PEAS a chance



## Parenting Through Pickiness

### Strategies for Keeping the “Peas” at the Table

A child’s hesitation with a new food can be a difficult experience for everyone. Watching a child refuse food can be frustrating and scary. Remembering a few strategies can make a big difference, but being patient and allowing a child to experience new foods at their own pace is key.

#### Helpful hints to encourage new foods with less fuss:

- \* **Provide choices.** Allowing your child to be involved in choosing foods for a meal will give them a sense of independence and will get them excited about eating the food.
- \* **Talk about it.** Have a conversation about what you are having for dinner to allow your child extra time to accept newer foods on the menu before sitting down at the table.
- \* **Try new foods as a family.** Show picky eaters at the table that there is nothing to be afraid of. Try a bite of the new food first; let them know what it tastes like and how glad you are you tried it.
- \* **Set family table rules.** Younger family members will mirror behavior at the table. Keep a positive atmosphere during meals by setting clear expectations for everyone at the table (and stick to them).



# Make New Foods Fun

It is a good idea to spice things up by trying a new food or a new recipe. Adding variety to meals can even help improve your health. But let's face it, new foods do not always go over well. Picky eaters can really dig their heels in when it comes to anything new or different.

**Here are some techniques to help your family have fun when trying new foods:**



**Make a mess.** Letting young children interact with a new food by playing is a great way for them get comfortable with new textures and smells. It may be a little messy, but giving children a chance to get to know a new food on their own terms is a good way to avoid picky behaviors.



**Be a food critic.** Get the whole family interested in a new food by having a taste-test. Set up a scale to allow each family member to easily score the food. Use categories like how it looks, tastes, smells to start a conversation about likes and dislikes.



**Give it time.** Most children will not try a new food the first time they see it. It can take several attempts for anyone to feel comfortable trying something new.

**Stick to sides.** Try to introduce a new food as a small part of the meal. Using it as a side will make the food seem less overwhelming to young children. Have other options at the table to allow them the choice to try the food without committing to a full serving at first.



**Keep up the good work.** Make new flavors a regular part of your child's life. Exposing children to new experiences in a safe setting with good role models can help them develop strong, long term healthy habits. Pick one night every week to try a new food, flavor, or recipe and help your family learn how to make new foods fun.

# New Foods Chart

Make meals interactive to help children accept new foods. Taking extra time to recognize your child for being brave and trying a new food is a great way to help them get excited about new tastes and experiences.

## **Materials Needed:**

- \* Small poster board, dry erase board, or paper
- \* Markers, crayons, and decorations
- \* Ruler
- \* Small stickers or a special marker



## **Directions:**

- \* Use a ruler to create the chart design you prefer.
- \* Let each child personalize their chart. Giving children control over the design will help get them excited about trying new foods.
- \* Hang each chart up where it can be easily seen during meals. Seeing their chart will help keep them engaged in the meal and will encourage new experiences at the table.
- \* Wait until the meal is over to add new foods served during the meal to the chart. Award one sticker for each new food tried during the meal. Talk about the foods as you award the sticker to reinforce healthy choices.

## **Tips:**

- \* Explain the new foods chart to your child. Set clear expectations at the table to help them be more adventurous.
- \* Give your child the choice to try a new food. Forcing them to eat will only cause frustration on both sides of the table.
- \* Never use the chart as a bribe or a punishment. Stickers are earned through bravery at the table and should not be used to convince kids to eat a food.

# Making Mealtime Memories

## Tantalizing Toppings for Taco Tuesday

Make Tuesday your family's official new foods day with make-your-own tacos. Tacos are a great way to introduce a new food because they are a familiar meal that you can add one or two new options to each week. Let children make their own tacos to help them develop motor skills and empower them to make healthy choices.

### New foods to try:

- \* Sliced avocado
- \* Roasted, diced sweet potato
- \* Shredded cabbage
- \* Chopped hard boiled egg
- \* Flaked baked fish
- \* Diced roasted beets
- \* Chopped steamed asparagus
- \* Sliced radish
- \* Diced summer squash
- \* Minced olives
- \* Diced cucumber
- \* Chopped fresh cilantro

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### Directions:

- \* Prepare your toppings and place each in a separate bowl or container.
- \* Place warmed taco shells on a plate or platter.
- \* Place toppings and shells on a counter or table with a serving utensil in each.
- \* Take time to talk about each of the new topping options to let everyone know what it might taste like on their taco.
- \* Let children assemble their own tacos to experiment with different flavor combinations.



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