



The WHALE Study
Family Newsletter
August | 27th | 2021

Picky Eating



It's not unusual for children ages 2-4 to go through a picky eating phase, which may come and go at different times. It's less common for these eating concerns to last beyond age 5 but persists in *up to 20%* of kids. Generally, picky eating is more common in kids who are sensitive to sensory elements (texture) and is not usually developmentally problematic in terms of weight, but can still be concerning to parents.

Parents' attitudes can shape children's experience with food. Here are some common suggestions on how to encourage your children's adventurous eating:

- **Don't pressure your kids.** Some are still working on having control over their environment and gaining independence or testing their limits with parents. If they sense anxiety in their parents, they can also develop uneasiness about food.
- **Have family dinner time.** Try to ensure children are ready to eat at dinner time because it means they are more likely to eat. This could mean not providing an after-school snack to immediately satisfy their cravings; and that's okay if your child ate a regular lunch and was nourished throughout the day.
- **Model healthy eating habits with a variety of food.** That means don't give up on new foods or those your child claims to not like. Research shows it can take 8-15 times to introduce a food before children's taste buds accept it. Continue to serve foods that are new or previously unliked. Your children don't need to have a different meal; serve kids the same as the rest of the family. Consider having some foods servable from the table so the child can choose whether (or not!) to put some on their plate. It can help to present a new food with a familiar or preferred food.
- **Don't reinforce their identity as a "picky eater."** Provide praise when they do try something new - even if they don't like it. You can also provide praise when you notice your child being adventurous in other areas of life!
- As we recommended last time, involve kids in grocery shopping and food prep. Be clear that you value their opinions and will include some of their favorites.

Consistently using these strategies can help support development of healthy eating habits! Challenges may become concerning for children around ages 7-8. If your child's distress continues, becomes extreme, or they develop *aversions to foods* previously enjoyed, you may want to consult with a professional such as their pediatrician.

Check out the page below for [eating](#) and [community](#) resources!

Click [here](#) to tell us what topics you want covered in future newsletters!



Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study or the COVID-19 situation. Staff can be reached by call, text, or email: whalestudy@unc.edu | 919-914-0588
Find us on Twitter: [@circlelab_unc](#), Instagram: [circlelab_unc](#), and [Facebook](#)!
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REMINDERS

***Reminder:** Please refer your friends if they have a 4-6-year-old and you think they would be interested in participating in the WHALE study. For every eligible family that you refer to us, you will receive \$10! Email us at whalestudy@unc.edu or call/text us at 919-914-0588 with their information.*

PICKY EATING + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

- Book Resource:
 - Helping Your Child with Extreme Picky Eating: A Step-by-Step Guide to Overcoming Selective Eating, Food Aversion and Feeding Disorders by Jenny McGlothlin and Katia Rowell.
- Suggestions:
 - [10 tips for picky eaters](#)
 - [What makes kids picky eaters and what helps them](#)
 - [15 steps to help picky eaters](#)
 - Click [here](#) and [here](#) for suggestions for school aged kids
- Social media:
 - [@kids.food.exposure.dietitian](#)

HOUSING

- [Durham Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#)
- Eviction Information: 216-965-5095
- [Durham Rescue Mission](#)
 - 919-688-9641
- [Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness](#)
- [Urban Ministries of Durham](#)
- [Durham County Social Services](#)
- [Orange County Social Services](#)
- [Wake County Social Services](#)

FOOD & GROCERIES

- [Wake County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Durham County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Orange County Food Resources](#)
- [Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools](#)
- [TABLE](#)
- [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#)
- [Wake County Food Resources](#)
- [No Kid Hungry NC](#) - Text FOODNC or COMIDA to 877-877 to receive information about 3 drive-thru or pickup sites with meals for kids closest to you

HEALTH & SAFETY

- [Compass Center for Women and Families](#)
 - 919-929-7122
- [Durham Crisis Response Center](#)
 - 919-403-9425
- [InterAct Family Safety and Empowerment Center](#)
 - 919-828-7501
- [Orange County Rape Crisis Center](#)
 - 866-935-4783 (call) , 919-504-5211 (text)
- [Freedom House](#)
 - 919-967-8844 (Crisis Unit, Chapel Hill)
 - 1-877-967-8844 (Mobile Service)
- [Suicide prevention lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME to 741 741

CHILDCARE

- [NC Hotline for Critical Workers Seeking Child Care Options](#)
- [Covid Childcare Co-op Creator](#)
- [Covid Urgent Childcare](#)
- [Child Care Services Association](#)

LEARNING

- [Scholastics Learn at Home](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [PBS Kids](#)
- [CDC Tips for Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)