



Wee Learn

Wee Explorers (18 months – 3 years): 6 Tips to Start Your Kids Off Eating Right

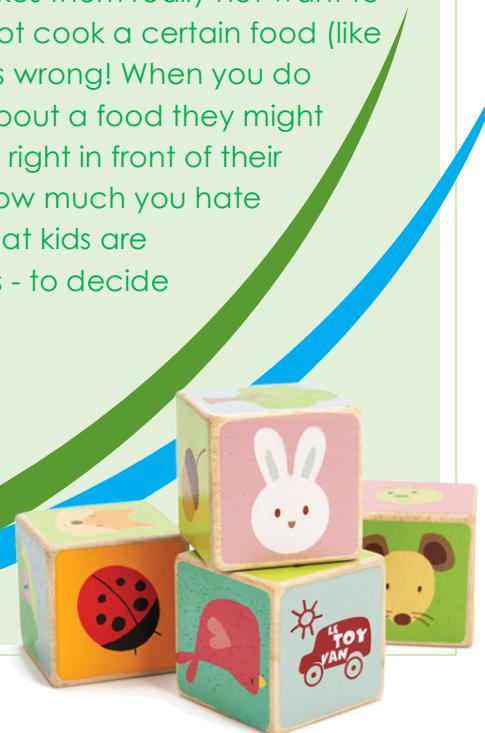


We all know that a healthy diet is important to start kids off on the right track. As parents and caregivers, we have the honour of shaping our kids' attitudes about food and eating, so we need to take that seriously. Many parents can benefit from the following suggestions about feeding their kids:

Don't use the term "picky eater," at least around your child. Parents should not use the term "picky eater" around their kids, because when a kid hears that they're a picky eater, it validates for them that shunning certain foods is a part of who they are.

No game playing. If a child doesn't want to eat certain foods, what are you teaching them by hiding the food in a pile of spaghetti sauce? When it comes to hiding vegetables, many of the picky eaters are already suspicious of food. When they find out that you've been hiding ingredients, they'll wonder what you've been hiding in other dishes. This takes them further away from building the trust and confidence that they need to try new foods. Be sure to always serve "obvious" vegetables, even if they don't eat them today, they're learning to choose vegetables.

Start from the start with normalizing fresh foods. Pressuring kids to eat 'healthy' foods is sort of like telling them to brush their hair or do their homework. When it's your idea, it makes them really not want to do it. We need to model healthy eating for our kids. Many parents do not cook a certain food (like fish or broccoli for example) because they themselves don't like it. That's wrong! When you do this, you're not even giving your kids a chance to make up their mind about a food they might end up liking. Or, when parents declare that they "hate" a certain food, right in front of their kids. Do think your kid is going to want to eat asparagus after you say how much you hate it? Think about the impact of your words and actions, and remember that kids are impressionable. They need time and exposure - sometimes up to 20 tries - to decide whether or not they like a food. Please allow them that.



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Involve your kids and teach them how to cook. Take your kids shopping and give them the opportunity to choose fresh whole foods that they want to try. Then, cook with them. The more invested a child feels in the meal, the more likely they are to eat it.

Don't freak out. Nothing bad is going to happen to your child if they refuse to eat vegetables for a few months. Just don't make a big deal about it because if you do, it's going to become a big deal.

Force feeding a child, persuading, bribing, game playing, making them sit at the table for three hours or getting angry will not further your cause, parents. Just relax and take a step back. Remember to honour and respect your child's hunger and satiety cues, and always remember the impact your words and actions have on your child.

<http://bit.ly/1shkB2G>



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