



Wee Builders(3 - 4 years): New Year, New Healthy Eating Habits For The Whole Family.

Like a lot of parents, they plan to keep their child's diet healthy and nutritious. They want to introduce them to all sorts of foods, won't cook anything different than the rest of the family, and insist they will learn to love vegetables. Things go well in the beginning, and then they get older and start eating only certain foods all the time and start developing unhealthy eating habits.

Meal time is a constant readjusting and learning process for parents and children. Children are going through periods of eating and finding out what they like and dislike. As parents, it is our job to encourage our children to try new things and teach them not only how to eat healthy, but why we eat healthy, and this can be a difficult job.

How can I encourage my preschooler to try foods other than pasta and quesadillas? This is called the "white diet" (salty, soft and sugary) and is a typical control issue. Children quickly learn that this is a hot button, and as parents, we bend. It's best to fix it before it starts but begin by giving them choices: this fruit or this fruit. Implement small changes, one at a time. Don't hover over them — they smell fear and they have your number. Sit back, let them make their choices and walk away.

What about getting vegetables into their diet? Should I sneak them somehow? You can always add a small number of things like butternut squash to a spaghetti sauce, cauliflower to macaroni and cheese. It's also helpful to create a snack tray using a muffin tin holder. Give them six choices of a few tablespoons in each one. Leave them alone and let them graze.

What are some suggestions on being able to tell the difference between being stubborn, not liking the taste or possibly having an allergy? Trust your gut. When kids spit things out, have dark circles under the eyes, diaper rashes, bloated stomach, hives, etc., that could be an allergy. Also, if they are really struggling with mood, sleep or ear infections, it could mean an allergy or intolerance to certain foods.

Instead of a battleground, how can I make mealtime the happy and healthy time it should be? Children will be more comfortable when parents are not so nervous. "This is what we are having. This is what we choose to eat. I'm not bribing you." Let them choose one item at the grocery store — the vegetable or new fruit. Make a big deal when you eat it: "These green beans have been brought to you by Susan!" Let them wash veggies, rip lettuce, peel potatoes. It is an opportunity to teach colors and texture. Say something like, "What is your favorite crunchy food?", and they become more interested making it a game.

Should the whole family be on board? Both parents need to be on the same page. It is 100 percent OK for Mom or Dad to not like mushrooms, but Mom and Dad can't go on and on about how gross they are. We lead by example and we are not perfect, so we must be honest with them about our challenges too.

It takes time. Just stick to the basics: whole food, moderation.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2EkmHuz>