

# Practical Tips to Help Children Try New Foods



This factsheet provides tips for parents and caregivers to encourage children to build a positive relationship with food. Remember, each child is unique, so feel free to change these tips to suit your child's needs.

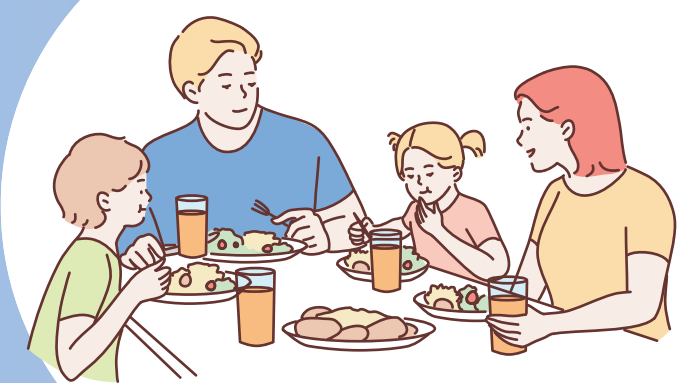


## 1. Introduce a Variety of Foods

- Offer a wide range of nutritious foods from different food groups.
- Introduce new foods gradually, one at a time, to give your child a chance to become familiar with them.
- Include a mix of flavours, textures, and colours to make meals interesting and appealing.

## 2. Make Mealtimes Positive and Enjoyable

- Plan family mealtimes, and create a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere during meals.
- Avoid distractions like television, screens, or toys at the table.
- Engage in pleasant conversation and encourage safe and positive interactions with food. Allow your child to explore their food to support their development. Expect a mess!



## 3. Be a Role Model

- Demonstrate healthy eating habits by enjoying a variety of foods yourself.
- Let your child see you trying new foods and enjoying different flavours.
- Use positive language and avoid negative comments about food.

## 4. Involve Your Child

- Include your child in meal planning, grocery shopping, and food preparation. This can increase their interest and willingness to try new foods.
- Let them choose a new food to try or help with age-appropriate tasks in the kitchen.
- Involve them in gardening and growing food.



## 5. Stick to Regular Meal and Snack Times

- Establish a consistent schedule for meals and snacks (e.g.: 3 meals and 2-3 snacks)
- Offer food every 2-3 hours.
- Avoid frequent grazing or constant snacking, as it can reduce appetite for meals.

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## 6. Offer Healthy Beverage Choices

- Make water the drink of choice.
- Offer water between meals and snacks to keep your child hydrated.
- Limit the consumption of sugary drinks and excessive milk or juice, as they can decrease appetite for meals.

## 7. Practice Division of Responsibility\*

- As a parent or caregiver, decide what food to offer and when and where meals occur.
- Trust your child to decide whether to eat and how much to eat from the foods you provide.
- Do not pressure, punish, or coerce your child to eat or finish their plate.
- Listen and trust that your child knows when they are hungry and full.



## 8. Be Patient, Try and Keep on Trying

- Offer new foods multiple times, even if your child initially rejects them.
- Children may need to see a food 10-15 times or more before they will try it.
- Present food in a fun and creative ways and textures (cooked, raw, mixed in a dish) or try different recipes to increase acceptance.
- Encourage self-feeding.

## 9. Establishing A Mealtime Routine

- Give your child 10-15 minutes' notice before any meal.
- Limit mealtime by allowing your child 20–30 minutes to eat. After this time, put the food away and let your child leave the table. Offer food again at the next scheduled meal or snack time.
- Prepare one meal for the family. Your child will be more open to trying new foods if they know they will not get their favourite foods when they say no to dinner.



## 10. Seek Professional Help if Needed

- If you have concerns about your child's appetite impacting their growth or nutrition, consult a healthcare provider, such as a pediatrician or registered dietitian, for guidance and support.
- To find a Registered Dietitian in Timiskaming, visit: [timiskaminghu.com](https://www.timiskaminghu.com)

It is normal for 2 to 5 years olds to experience a decrease in appetite because they grow at a slower rate. By following these tips and staying positive, you can help your child develop a healthy relationship with food and expand their food preferences over time.



**For more information, contact Timiskaming Health Unit at 1-866-747-4305**



R-46a-HBHC (02.24)