



Remember children are erratic and picky as part of normal development try to take a deep breath and see the big picture over a week their intake is more than likely balanced.

Anchored Nutrition Therapy

Most kids go through a picky eating stage often as toddlers or preschoolers when they often only want certain foods over and over. I can remember when our daughter was small she only wanted ham and cheese sandwiches. Kids will also eat varying amounts depending on the day and how they feel, and their level of activity some days they will finish everything on their plates others they may just pick at things. But if we take a step back and look at the big picture by in large their intake is adequate.

It is a good idea to have the pediatrician look over the growth chart with you, remember genetics plays a role. Some kids are smaller and some are larger. The key is that they are following their unique growth curve wherever that may be.

It is hard being a parent it doesn't come with a handbook, and there is a lot of pressure to get it "right" with many offering advice when your child is "picky" or not eating as well its easy to feel discouraged and indeed worried. But remember many of these things are a normal part of development and there are various approaches that can make all the difference. The Ellyn Satter Institute has some wonderful resources. The Book *Secrets to Feeding a Healthy family* is a wonderful book. I have talked about the division of responsibility in a previous blog post. Where the parents role in feeding is to decide what, when and where to eat, cook and provide the food. The child's role is to decide what and how much to eat.

When picky eating becomes a little harder to handle the Book by Dr Katja Rowell is wonderful Helping your Child with Extreme Picky Eating.

A few tips for handling meals and snacks or eating opportunities are

- To focus on regular meals with small snacks in between ensuring the child comes to the table feeling hungry and ready to enjoy their meal.
- Practice the division of responsibility.
- With a picky eater offering safe foods such as bread, crackers so the child will see something they can eat. Let the child feel safe with no pressure, trust that in time they may surprise you and try something new.
- Parents plan a meal in a pleasant environment without distractions with foods you enjoy so that your child sees you enjoying food.
- Build a relationship with trust, let the child know what's in the food and try to resist the urge to sneak foods in as they may not trust you.
- Involve your kids in gardening, shopping and cooking to spark an interest and a sense of pride that they have been part of the process.
- Try not to feel shame around food and nutrition messaging, trying to only buy organic or clean food, shame should never be tied to food, it's the big picture and pattern of eating over time.
- Tune in to your child's cues when they eat are they content? are they gagging or looking upset? what are they saying and respond kindly, listening to them.
- How we learn to eat is as important as what we eat, the environment and experience of eating should be fun and engaging and a collaboration between the child and parent.
- Parents try and talk positively about food don't #yuck someone else's yum"
- Treat desserts as just another food, don't use it as a bribe to get the child to eat the main course, they may feel that the main course is less desirable and they have to earn dessert.
- Family meals help model trying new foods, socialization, support and exposure to a wide variety of foods.
- It can also help kids feel loved and heard.
- Be honest with kids about tastes and food preferences not all foods will be liked.
- We can alter the way we cook foods to change the taste. Have fun and experiment.
- Kids need time to connect with foods to expand their palates.
- Gardening is wonderful as they can slowly connect with foods as it grows and are more likely to try it.
- Try not to have any pre-conceived ideas about what foods kids will like, maybe you feel kids won't like spicy foods, international recipes and adventurous foods like raw fish in sushi, mussels or octopus.
- They may surprise you!
- Kids are like sponges: be careful of what you say around bodies, dieting and negative statements around food.

- Let them discover the joy of new foods, getting messy in the kitchen and eating with a blank slate to write their own food story.
- Children generally aren't motivated by the nutritional value of food or how it will make them "grow big and strong" they will be more likely to eat a nourishing diet by being involved in gardening, shopping and cooking and the taste, flavor and texture of foods.
- Make eating fun!
-
- If you are concerned maybe ask for an assessment with an OT and a registered dietitian, for support.
-
- Remember you are not alone and help and support is there, ensure you focus on your own self care, stay calm and be patient you are a great parent.
-



Plan meals for the family as a whole, try and avoid short order cooking, with a picky eater offer a safe food such as bread or crackers, the child will see something they can eat. Let the child feel safe with no pressure, trust that in time they may surprise you and try something new.

Anchored Nutrition Therapy