

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING BY MAKING **MEALTIME FUN FOR YOUR KIDS**

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Do you have picky eaters who dread sitting down at the table for a meal? Make mealtime fun for your children and encourage them to eat healthy at the same time. *You'll instill nutritious eating habits for a lifetime of health benefits!*

Try these ideas to add some fun to your healthy meals:

1. **Incorporate many colors into each meal.** Children are fascinated by the rainbow and are more likely to pay attention to their food if it's colorful.
 - ***Try a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.*** Yellow squashes, green beans, purple eggplants, red tomatoes and others can make your table stand out and shine.
 - You can also add color with your table settings. Entertain your kids with plates or placemats showing fun scenes.
2. **Use a variety of shapes.** Children may enjoy having their food cut up into different shapes.
 - Use cookie cutters or try your knife skills to make fun shapes out of food. From stars to circles, your kids will love them.
 - ***You may also want to try letting your children use the cookie cutters to make shapes.***
3. **Create fun scenes and pictures.** Have you tried to add smiling faces to pancakes or turn waffles into little homes?
 - Mealtime can also be more fun if you arrange the food on the plate into a picture or scene.

- Funny faces and figures are popular among children. However, you can also make outdoor scenes with salads as the grass and orange slices as the sun. Try turning the food into cute animals from time to time.

4. Dress up the meals with condiments. *Condiments can add color and spice to the meal and encourage your children to try new foods.* Have plenty of ketchup, mustard, mayo, salad dressing, barbecue sauce, hot sauce, and other items handy before you sit down to eat.

- Your children may enjoy using the squeeze bottles to make fun words or shapes. The ketchup can be used to make a heart, and the salad dressing can help you create a little lake on their plate.

5. Make up appealing names. The names of certain vegetables and fruits can make picky eaters squirm. However, you can fight back by using unique names for common food items. *Children respond to cute vegetable names and are attracted to them.*

- For example, children respond better to broccoli being called “little green trees.”
- A study, titled “Attractive names sustain increased vegetable intake in schools,” found that changing the name of carrots to “X-ray vision carrots” encouraged more children to eat them.

6. Cut up food into small bites. Children often prefer to eat food that is in small pieces. It’s easier for them to grab, chew, and swallow.

- If your picky eaters are refusing to finish their sandwiches or burgers, consider cutting these items up into smaller pieces. *Bite-sized pieces can encourage them to finish their meals.*
- You may also want to try miniature food items that are more fun for children to eat.

7. Encourage children to participate.

From helping you cook to setting the table, children who participate during mealtimes are more likely to finish their food.

Mealtime can be a fun experience for your children, and you can help fussy eaters enjoy it. These steps are easy to follow and adjust to your family's needs.