

Developing Taste Preferences

The first two years of life are an important time for teaching your baby to like vegetables and other healthy foods

Introduce a variety of healthy foods from all the food groups (vegetables, fruits, grains, meats/protein, dairy) by the time your baby is 7 to 8 months old.

Babies are born with a natural preference for sweet tastes, but not sour or bitter tastes, so they might not like the taste of vegetables right away. Offering vegetables early and often is one of the best ways to help your baby learn to like them.



Tips to help your baby learn to like healthy foods

- When introducing a new vegetable, try mixing it first with a familiar food such as breast milk, formula, or cereal. For toddlers, try pairing a new veggie with familiar flavors, like hummus or another healthy dip.
- It is normal for a child to continue to reject new food items the first few times. Don't forget that it may take some children up to 15 or 20 tries before accepting a new food. Be patient and keep trying!
- Let your child use all five senses to explore new food. Smelling, licking, touching, and playing with new foods can help children learn to like them. This can be messy, but fun!
- Children learn from watching what their caregivers do. Set a good example by eating healthy food and avoid negative comments or reactions if you don't like it.
- Focus on feeding your baby and toddler foods with no or low amounts of added sugars and sodium (salt), since these foods tend to be healthier. This might also help prevent your child from eating too much salt and sugar later in life.



Dealing with picky eating

Picky eating, including accepting just a few food items or refusing to try new foods, is a common behavior for toddlers. During this time of life, children go through major changes in what and how they like to eat. Sometimes they even start refusing food they once liked.

Be patient and keep trying. Continue with your feeding routines, provide a variety of healthy food and textures, and encourage children to try new foods or accept food they previously liked. It's important to continue allowing them to decide how much to eat and not to pressure them to eat.