

Help for Picky Eaters

By Lisa A. Lundy

Author of: The Super Allergy Girl™ Allergy & Celiac Cookbook

www.TheSuperAllergyCookbook.com

In my experience with picky eaters, there can be many, many underlying reasons. As a general rule, most children are 'picky eaters' for a reason although sometimes the reason that they are picky eaters is because they are running the proverbial household instead of the parents. Below are my tips for parents and guardians who are dealing with children who are picky eaters. As long as credit is given as listed above, the contents of this document may be freely shared on websites, blogs, and in publications. Credit constitutes the copyright symbol along with the author's name, title and website address as listed above.

1. Rule out celiac disease

Undiagnosed celiac disease could be the medical cause for picky eating in children or adults. A blood test is the first step in getting a diagnosis of celiac disease. The cancer rate for undiagnosed celiac is 200-300% higher than the general population, which is a compelling reason to get diagnosed. The cancer rate for a diagnosed celiac is the same as the rest of the population. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease, which runs in families, where eating wheat, barley, rye and other grains that contain gluten cause an autoimmune response. The treatment for celiac disease is a gluten-free diet. Celiac disease is very common in the U.S. occurring in about 1% of the population. Before you do anything else, check with your pediatrician or physician to rule out this excellent disease.

2. Check for any food allergies or food sensitivities or intolerances

Food allergies (IgE mediated) or food sensitivities or intolerances (non-IgE mediated) can also be a cause for picky eating. See your pediatrician or primary care physician for diagnostic blood testing. IgE mediated food allergies can be fatal and great caution must be used with food allergies.

3. Remove food additives, food dyes and preservatives

Chemicals in foods like dyes, additives and preservatives are used in foods to save the food manufacturer money. Chemical food additives are known to cause health issues in human beings. See the Feingold® Association website, www.Feingold.org, for medical studies on the negative health effects including asthma, ADD, ADHD, learning problems, behavior problems and more.

Part of the technique or process of dealing with picky eaters is to logically go through an elimination process ruling problems in or out. With respect to food additives, dyes and preservatives – they can cause a mild upset to the stomach or GI system – such that the result is a child not feeling hungry. Food dyes made my second child wet the bed and chemical food additives gave my first son nightmares. If you have a picky eater, or child who is low on the growth chart (or overweight), it would be wise to consider if these chemicals are part of the problem.

4. Reduce sugar

Could too much sugar be the reason that you have a picky eater? It actually could be the reason for picky eating. Excess sugar consumption is associated with cancer, obesity, and other serious health issues, which is just one more good reason to reduce sugar.

5. Keep a food diary or log

To help you eliminate specific foods as a source of picky eating, keep a food log or diary noting the foods eaten, the quantity of food eaten, the time of day and any notable behaviors and sleeping changes. Often parents can pin down a few patterns of food or environment that are impacting the child's appetite.

6. Check out the book "Is This Your Child?" by Dr. Doris Rapp, M.D.

Dr. Doris Rapp, M.D. is board certified in three fields of medicine: pediatrics, allergy and environmental medicine; and she has been a physician for over 50 years. Who could be more qualified to write a definitive guide for parents? That is what the book "Is This Your Child?" represents, in my humble opinion. Many public libraries carry this book as well as some of her other books making it accessible to people.

7. Remember a food must be offered 21 times before it is officially rejected

Experts indicated that a food must be offered at least 21 times before you can consider the food rejected. Most of us parents stop at 4 or 5 times. Keep offering your child new foods. It is best to develop a child's palate when they are very young, but if that didn't happen it is not too late. My youngest child reacted to so many foods that she simply wasn't able to eat a wide variety of foods. As a result, she had to develop her taste for many foods at an older age. It is not nearly as easy, but it can be done. Keep offering your child different foods.

8. Is food a power struggle or control issue?

If you have earnestly ruled out celiac disease, other medical conditions, food allergies and food sensitivities, and have followed the other suggestions I have made above, it would be good to consider if the picky eating has to do with a power struggle or control issues. Discuss this with your physician for recommendations and evaluation.

Last tip: (Not covered in the video) – Get your kids into the kitchen helping with menu selection and food preparation. The more involved they are with making choices and making the food, the more inclined they are to eat the food. Watch a child prepare a dish or help slightly to prepare a food dish and they are often quite proud and excited. They are simply less likely to refuse the food they helped make.