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Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

Children's Health: Picky Eaters

Teach healthy eating habits early in life

You know it's important to feed your children a wide variety of healthy foods. But what if they are resistant to trying something new?

Don't Give In

As hard as it may be to listen to your child whining about how much he or she dislikes a certain food, stand firm. By giving in to demands, you are setting a precedent that your child will take advantage of for years to come. Make it clear that you are serving one meal for the family, and one meal only. When your child sees everyone else enjoying the meal, he or she will be more likely to join in.

Do

- Have everyone at the table eat the protested food as if it is the best thing they ever tasted. Place the dish near your child; he or she may be tempted to try it.
- Try to include at least two side dishes you know your child will eat; that way, if he or she refuses to touch the main course, at least there are other options.
- Make a game out of eating for younger children. Say "I know you can eat one forkful easily, but I bet you won't be able to eat two. And three – forget

about it!" He or she may be excited to prove you wrong.

- If your child does try a food but still does not like it, praise him or her for making the effort.
- Hide your dislike of certain foods from your child. If he or she sees that you don't like something, it's likely he or she will not even try it.

Don't

- Tell your child he or she cannot leave the table until the food is finished. The "clean your plate" mentality may actually promote childhood obesity by encouraging overeating.
- Negotiate. If you say "Eat all your carrots," do not let it become "Eat just one carrot."
- Give the picky eater dessert no matter what. If you feel a genuine attempt was made to try the food, you may want to reward that effort.

- Allow your child to have dessert as a snack. If he or she asks for a snack after dinner, offer a piece of fruit or glass of milk.

Helpful Hints

- Ask your children to help you prepare dinner. This will get them excited about trying the meal they had a hand in creating.
- Serve a do-it-yourself meal, such as tacos. Your child will be able to make the item to his or her liking.
- Sometimes the presentation of a food can make all the difference. Get creative—make shapes or smiley faces.
- Hide a food within another, such as pureeing vegetables and blending them into soups and sauces.
- Lead by example. If you don't eat healthy foods, your child won't want to either.

Did You Know...?

Chicken nuggets and fries do not provide the adequate nutrition children need. While they are fun meals on occasion, don't make it a habit of serving this type of food.