

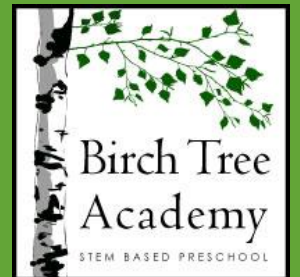
Eating Well



Birch Tree Academy Parent Class

March 2021

www.BirchTreeAcademy.com



Agenda

- Picky Eaters
- Creating a Positive Eating Environment
- How Much Should My Child Eat?
- Developing Healthy Eating Habits
- Solving Common Problems

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, seen from the side, feeding a baby in a blue high chair. The baby is crying with its eyes closed and a distressed expression. The woman is holding a red bowl and a spoon, offering food to the baby. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text 'Picky Eaters' is overlaid in a large, black, serif font across the middle of the image.

Picky Eaters

UGH

How Food Tastes Develop

- The ability to perceive flavors begins in utero
- Early experiences with food determine preferences across the lifespan
- Shortly after birth, young infants show characteristic taste preferences
 - Sweet elicit positive responses
 - Bitter and sour elicit negative responses.
- Smell, texture, temperature and appearance join with taste to create a person's perception of flavor.
- Early likes and dislikes are influenced by these innate preferences but are also modifiable.

Why Kids May be Picky Eaters

- They're not hungry
 - Shortly after the first birthday a toddler's weight gain suddenly slows down.
 - By 18 to 24 months, many toddlers become "grazing animals," preferring many snacks a day to regular meals.
- Mealtime means more than food
 - To your toddler, a meal is as much play or a science experiment as it is a time to eat.
- They hate green
 - Red signals what's ripe, sweet, and safe to eat. Green foods are often bitter or unripe.
 - Even with lollipops— toddlers pick red over green almost every time!
- "Temperamental" taste buds
 - Some kids are just born with a hyper-sensitivity to strong flavors.



Irregular Eating Behaviors Explained

- **Irregular Behavior:** A child eats a ton one day and very little the next
- **Explanation:** Growth slows during the toddler years, and so do calorie needs
 - Kids also just feel different from one day to the next
- **How to Deal:** Don't expect your toddler to dine on an adult's schedule. Offer your child five mini meals throughout the day
 - Avoid letting her fill up on sources of empty calories, like sugary fruit drinks
 - **If they refuse a few meals, don't panic or try to force or bribe them to eat:** They won't starve.
 - Toddlers usually end up getting all the nutrients they need, even when their eating patterns are erratic,

Irregular Eating Behaviors Explained

- **Behavior:** A child is super messy during meals
- **Explanation:** At this age, your child spends every waking moment exploring and experimenting—mealtime included.
 - They are not doing it to annoy you!
- **How to deal:** Up to about 2 years old, allow your child to explore their food (within reason)
 - After that age, let children know that you expect them to not play with their food and that if they continue, it will be taken away.
 - Give them other sensory materials to explore instead such as play-doh and sand

Irregular Eating Behaviors Explained

- **Behavior:** A child wants the same thing for dinner every night
- **Explanation:** Blame toddlers' love of repetition and routine
 - They want to hear the same stories, play with the same toy, and, yes, eat the same foods every day. Parents worry that they're raising a picky eater, but food jags are a normal part of development.
- **How to Deal:** It's okay to give your child what she wants occasionally but offer her something else as well
 - Your kiddo should be eating whatever the rest of your family is eating, which sometimes is mac and cheese but not every night
 - They may not eat it all but they get a chance to try different foods and develop tastes for various flavors and textures.

A top-down photograph of two young children sitting at a dark wooden table. The child on the left has curly brown hair and is wearing a yellow short-sleeved shirt. The child on the right has blonde hair styled in a braid and is wearing a light blue lace-trimmed vest over a white shirt. Both children are looking down at their plates of food. Each plate contains a serving of broccoli, cauliflower, baby carrots, and asparagus. A knife and fork are placed on the table next to each plate. The text 'Create A Positive Eating Environment' is overlaid in a large, black, serif font across the center of the image.

Create A Positive Eating Environment

Mealtimes

- Put them on a meal schedule and don't vary from it, if at all possible
- Schedule meals so that they're 2-3 hours apart
 - Avoid 'grazing' on snacks or other foods in between so they're hungry when they sit down
 - It doesn't take many calories for a toddler to refuse their next meal.
- Eat in the same place as much as possible
 - The consistency of eating in the same place will help them adjust to the routine
 - Ideally, this is in a high- chair or strapped booster seat

Set the Table

- Have your child help choose and prepare family meals
 - Let them put ingredients in the pot and as they get older, help with cooking
 - When old enough, have them set the table
- Adjust the seat so your toddler can easily reach his or her plate but have your child sit at the table with your family
- Use placemats with maps, animals or shapes to keep them occupied.
- Expect your toddler to be a little messy
 - You can place a plastic sheet underneath the table to help with clean-up.
- Limit distractions at mealtime
 - Turn off the TV
 - No toys at the table
 - No phones/devices at the table



Bon Appetit!

- Provide a pleasant mealtime atmosphere
 - Try to avoid disciplining your child during meals.
- Talk about your day at meals
 - Your voices are calming to your children
 - It models behavior you want for your family—good communication
- Show your child how much you enjoy eating the food you've prepared.
- Set a time limit of about 20 minutes for a meal
 - If your child hasn't eaten the food, take it away
 - **Do not offer an alternative snack or meal.** This sets a bad precedent
- Demonstrate good table manners — toddlers learn by imitating parents.
- Allow your toddler to feed him or herself as much as possible.



Making Mealtime Fun

- Sing and/or play a song which signals the beginning of mealtime
- Do not use your cell phone at the table!
 - It tells your family that the phone is more important than family mealtime
- Give your family your full attention
 - Make sure everyone is seated
 - Take time to talk and listen to each other
 - This becomes a crucial ritual as your kids get older!
- Talk about fun things
 - What's the best toy you ever had? What is the coolest place you have ever been?

After the Meal

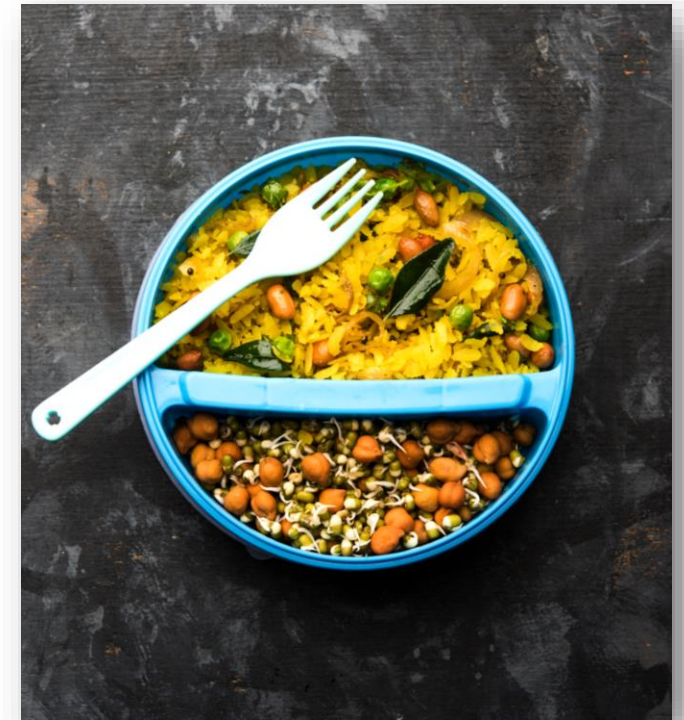
- Allow your child to choose an after mealtime incentive (within reason)
 - This could be a special book or a game they like to play
 - As a reward for good behavior at the table
- Have them help you clear the table (age appropriate)
 - Kids feel like helpers
 - They understand that every dish they use requires cleaning
 - Makes your life easier!

A top-down photograph of a young child with blonde hair, wearing a pink and white polka-dot long-sleeved shirt, sitting at a wooden table. The child is holding a white bowl filled with milk and cereal (orange rings) with a silver spoon. The background is a dark wooden table. The text 'How Much Should My Child Eat?' is overlaid in a large, black, serif font across the center of the image.

How Much Should My Child Eat?

How Much Should My Child Eat?

- The best guide of how much your child should be eating is their appetite
 - If you are concerned, talk to a pediatrician
- Your child should not be expected to join the “clean plate club.”
 - It is highly unlikely that you give them a perfectly sized portion
 - They will either leave a little bit on their plate or ask for more.
- Don't make comments that relate eating to body image
 - Saying things like “Don't eat so much, you'll get fat” or “You're so skinny, eat some more” can have lifelong implications for your child's mental health



Calorie Needs for 2-4 Year Old

| Ages 2 to 4: Daily Guidelines | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Calories | 1,000-1,600, depending on growth and activity level |
| Protein | 2-5 ounces |
| Fruits | 1-1.5 cups |
| Vegetables | 1-2 cups |
| Grains | 3-5 ounces |
| Dairy | 2-2.5 cups |

Calorie Needs for 5-8 Year Old

| Ages 5-8: Daily Guidelines | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Calories | 1,200-2,000, depending on growth and activity level |
| Protein | 3-5.5 ounces |
| Fruits | 1-2 cups |
| Vegetables | 1.5-2.5 cups |
| Grains | 4-6 ounces |
| Dairy | 2.5 cups |



Developing Healthy Eating Habits

Developing Healthy Habits

- Encourage independence:
 - The more a child is involved in preparation of the meal, the more enjoyable it will be for them to eat
 - Bring your child into the kitchen with you as you prepare meals and snacks, encouraging them to smell, touch, and observe different foods. You can even let them help you cook.
 - If you can, grow a few foods at home or in your garden. Kids are much more likely to try foods if they see where they come from.
- At mealtimes, allow children to choose from acceptable options:
 - “Should we have carrots or broccoli?”
 - “Would you like to use a fork or a spoon?”
 - “Should we use the blue plate or the green plate?”
 - They feel like they have a say—you make sure the choices are reasonable

Food Do's and Don'ts

| Category | Eats lots!  | Try To Limit  |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Grains | Whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, popcorn, quinoa, or brown or wild rice | Refined grains such as white bread, pasta and rice |
| Dairy | Low-fat dairy products, such as milk, Greek yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese or fortified soy beverages. | Milk and yogurts with added sugar, such as chocolate milk |
| Fruits and Veggies | Provide a variety of fruits & veggies, including dark green, red and orange. Also try beans, peas and potatoes | Too much dried fruit or fruit juice |
| Protein | Try fish, turkey, chicken and lean beef | Fried or overly salted meats |
| Sodium | Encourage snacking on fruits and vegetables | Limit refined snack foods. Most children consume too much sodium |

Introducing New Foods

- Take advantage of the fact that 1-year-olds enjoy putting everything in their mouths
 - Use this year to offer many new, varied foods
 - By age 2, most children are reluctant to try new foods.
- Serve foods with a variety of colors, textures, flavors and temperatures.
 - This helps provide good nutrition and shows that good foods look and feel different
- Offer small amounts of food at a time
 - Large amounts of food on the plate may discourage your toddler from trying
- Be careful when adding seasonings
 - It is rarely necessary for small kids
- Avoid sweets such as candies and cookies
 - They may dull the appetite for more nutritious food
 - Kids don't need them
- Offer new foods when your child is relaxed and isn't too tired or distracted by other things
 - A restaurant is not a great setting to introduce new foods!

Dessert

- Try and avoid desserts for as long as possible
- Dessert is not a...
 - Right
 - Thing that has to be had every day
 - Reward for eating dinner
 - Way to fill yourself up if you didn't like dinner
- Dessert is
 - Something special we occasionally have, after we have had a healthy meal

Cooking Tips

- Try baking or sauteing rather than boiling
 - It's easy to accidentally overcook when boiling—removes flavor and makes food mushy
 - Baking and sauteing brings out natural flavor and maintains consistency of food
 - Example: Baked Broccoli →
- For older kids, try healthy sauces and dips
 - Salsa, hummus soy sauce, yogurt ranch and others are low in fat and sugar and make plain foods more interesting
 - Pesto is a great way to introduce flavor to pasta

Baked Broccoli

This is a super simple recipe that most kids (and adults) really like! Your kids can also help make this.

1. Preheat oven to 400
2. Cut or tear broccoli into one to two inch pieces and spread them out on a baking sheet pan
3. Coat liberally in olive oil. Salt and pepper to taste.
4. Bake for 15-20 min.

This recipe also works well with carrots and brussel sprouts.

A photograph of a baby with frosting smeared on their face, sitting at a table and eating a cupcake. In the background, there are pink balloons and a gift bag. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

Solving Common Problems

Toddler Throws Food

- Problem: My 1.5-year-old eats a bit and then just plays with her food, smearing it and throwing it

Step 1: Set Boundary

Tell the child: "When you throw food, it makes a mess. Your food needs to stay on your plate/tray"

STEP 2: Divert Attention

Give them a special spoon to eat with. Teach them to say 'all done' and take the tray/plate away

Step 3: Boundary Reminder

If they continue, pick up the plate and say, "No throwing food or dinner will be over", then put it back down.

Step 4: Enforce Boundary

If that doesn't work, say, "You must not be hungry", take the plate away and end the meal. No snacks or additional food afterwards.

Picky Eater

- Problem: 3-year-old will not eat vegetables

Step 1: Set Boundary

Tell the child: "Vegetables help you grow big and strong and make you healthy."

STEP 2: Divert Attention

Give them vegetables when they are most hungry (on the way home from the park, after swimming, etc). Try giving them vegetables as they wait for dinner to be ready.

Step 3: Boundary Reminder

"It's important to eat your vegetables as well as your pasta. You can eat the broccoli or the carrots, but you need to have one of them before you get more pasta".

Step 4: Enforce Boundary

If a child doesn't eat their vegetables, they don't get seconds of the favored food.

Moving Eater

- Problem: My 4-year-old will only eat while walking around and playing, and never at the table

Step 1: Set Boundary

Tell the child: "The table is where we eat our meals. You need to be in your seat" Make sure you set a good example by eating only there too.

STEP 2: Divert Attention

Engage them in conversation about things they love. If acceptable, get them a 'wobble stool' which allows them to move a bit while still at the table.

Step 3: Boundary Reminder

"If you get up from the table, that tells us you're done with dinner."

Step 4: Enforce Boundary

If your child won't sit at the table, don't offer them food elsewhere. Once they leave the table, take away all of the food and do not let them have snacks away from the table. Don't cave! It will take a day or two at most for them to figure it out.

When to Speak to a Doctor

- If your child:
 - accepts fewer than 20 foods
 - is losing weight
 - dislikes or refuses entire food groups (grains, dairy, proteins, etc.)
 - goes days without eating at all
 - is committed to certain food brands or types of packaging
 - requires a different meal from the rest of the family
 - is anxious in social situations because of food
 - has a dramatic emotional response to disliked foods, such as screaming, running away, or throwing objects



Bon Appetit!

Birch Tree Academy is a STEM based bilingual preschool with heart. We're located in the greater Seattle area. Learn more at www.BirchTreeAcademy.com.

Questions? Contact us at info@birchtreeacademy.com.