



## BANISH FUSSY EATING

Does your child reject food, especially vegetables? Does he or she get easily distracted or refuse to sit at the table while eating? Don't get worried—get motivated!

### dinner dilemmas

Small children often become fussy with food between the ages of one and four. This is normal behavior as toddlers begin to assert their independence. Research shows that having empathy and respect for a child's opinion while maintaining clear boundaries and expectations is linked with less obesity and more healthful dietary habits. Your role is to control what foods are offered and when and where they are eaten. Your child will control how much is eaten and which foods are consumed.

### fussy eating tips

► **Make meal time family time.** Family meals are associated with improved nutritional intake, weight control, and emotional health in children. Sit at the table as often as possible, and switch off the TV!

► **Be a good role model.** Children will mimic your choices from an early age. In a study of two- to six-year-olds, when kids were allowed to "buy" foods from a play supermarket, those who stocked up on sweets, sugary drinks, and snacks generally had parents

whose typical shopping carts contained these foods.

► **Include new foods with familiar foods.** It can take up to ten repeated exposures for a child to accept and like a new food. Offer small portions, and don't give up after just a few tries!

► **Don't be a short-order cook.** Make the same dinner for everyone. If it is refused, remove it, and offer it again at the next meal.

► **Avoid snacks or drinks one hour before meals.** If your child consistently refuses meals, check on how much milk or juice he or she is drinking throughout the day.

► **Teach food appreciation.** Involve your kids in planning, shopping, cooking, and gardening. Gardening and cooking parties can double kids' consumption of vegetables.

► **Don't use food as a reward.** Stickers work just as well. While bribing with dessert may initially help, in the long run it can foster negative feelings toward healthy foods and make sweets more appealing.

Finally, accept and love your child no matter what!

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See [www.sueradd.com](http://www.sueradd.com) for more nutrition information.