Dealing with Mealtime Difficulties

Parents should not try to make their children to eat. A parent’s job is to offer nutritious meals and snacks at appropriate times throughout the day. It is the child’s job to decide whether to eat and how much.

Expect Smaller Appetites

In their first year of life, babies grow more than they will during any other year in their lives, and they need a lot of food to keep up with this growth. Toddlers and preschoolers grow at a much slower rate and, therefore, do not need as much food. It is common to notice a decrease in appetite starting around a child's first birthday.

Feed Picky Eaters

Toddlers and preschoolers are notoriously picky eaters because of the change in their appetites (compared with infancy) and also because of their emotional development, specifically first learning about independence, and then testing the limits of that independence. Children at this age also tend to prefer things that are familiar to them, so they are often hesitant to try new foods. When young children refuse to eat food, they often get a lot of attention from their parents, which reinforces a negative behavior. Serve a food your child will eat at each meal, such as bread.