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How Can I Get My Preschooler To Be A Better Eater?

Georgia Lauritzen

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A weekly question/answer column

How Can I Get My Preschooler To Be A Better Eater?

Georgia Lauritzen answers:*

Preschoolers are at a very formative period in their lives, and this is an opportune time to develop good nutritional patterns. The following guidelines will help make feeding preschool children an enjoyable and healthful experience.

- Serve meals on a regular schedule at a time when the child is hungry but not overtired.
- Have the food already on the plate when the child arrives at the table to avoid any long delay in starting to eat.
- Serve food with mild flavors and aromas.
- Serve finger foods.
- Avoid extreme temperatures, either too hot or too cold.
- Serve simple and familiar foods; occasionally try something new.
- Remember that by age 3, most chewy foods can be managed without fear of choking.
- Serve small portion sizes: let a child achieve a clean plate and not feel defeated.
- Resist the temptation to coax a child to eat.
- Allow the child to participate in planning and preparing foods.
- Have patience. Table manners develop gradually over a period of years mainly from mimicking other manners.
- Encourage a high activity level for children.
- Avoid comments about children's eating habits, either positive or negative.

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