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NEWS RELEASE

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Help: My Child is a Picky Eater!

“Sweet potatoes used to be Isabel’s favorite food, but now she won’t even touch them!” “Alexander won’t eat anything orange, just because of the color.” “Chuck will only eat white foods.” Many of these statements may sound familiar if you have a preschooler.

Although it can be very frustrating at times, understand that picky eating is a temporary behavior of many preschoolers. This may help a parent cope with this growing stage. The best ways a parent can deal with a child who is a picky eater is to not make their picky habit a big deal. In most cases, picky eating is another step in the process of growing up and becoming independent. There are many positive reinforcements that a parent can do to deal with picky eaters and help a child learn about new foods. As a parent, your role is to decide **WHAT** and **WHEN** food is offered and children decide **HOW MUCH** they are going to eat. Here are a few tips that may help deal with a picky eater:

- Kids often like to eat food they have helped prepare. Let your child help you make meals in the kitchen.
- Offer choices. Try to avoid asking “yes” or “no” questions such as “Do you want zucchini with your chicken for dinner?” Instead try asking “Which would you like with your chicken for dinner: zucchini or green beans?” This allows your child to still express their independence and keeps you from becoming a “short-order cook.”
- Try to keep meal times as stress-free as possible. Talk with your preschooler about his day – he will definitely want to tell you.
- Let your child pick out the produce at the market. If you want a specific type of fruit or vegetable, ask them to help you find it in the store.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods in combination with familiar foods. Get creative. For example, if your child is used to eating macaroni and cheese, mix in a vegetable such as peas or broccoli to the macaroni and cheese. They may be more willing to try this “new” food.

Parents and child care providers can learn more tips for dealing with picky eaters through the UCCE’s Nutrition BEST program at 530-889-7350 or visit us online at <http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu>.

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