

Picky Eating

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I love having a picky eater
and making more than one
meal at dinner time...

Said no mom ever!

**BE KIND. FOR
EVERYONE YOU MEET
IS FIGHTING A HARD
BATTLE!**

What is Picky Eating?

- eating a limited number of foods
- avoiding a whole food group
- eat different foods than the rest of the family

Picky Eating

Can appear within 18-24 months of age. At this time it is considered a normal variant of development.

Classifications of Picky Eating

There is no agreed upon classification system that captures the complexity of pediatric feeding problems.

Today we will be talking about Picky Eating as a general term and discuss how the severity level can affect our kids.

How can Picky Eating affect a child?

- decrease your child's attention and energy levels, which can prevent them from being able to explore their environment and learn new information as efficiently
- decrease cognitive functioning
- weaken their immune system, making it harder to fight off illnesses and diseases
- increased risk for weight problems (under or overweight)
- dental problems if preferred foods are limited to snack items/sweets
- not being able to participate in snack or mealtimes at school or daycare can negatively impact his/her ability to interact with peers and learn social norms

How can Picky Eating affect the family?

- Picky eating negatively impacts the social well-being of the child and the family as a whole.
- As a parent, one of your primary roles is to provide for your child, and not being able to fulfill that role can be stressful, isolating, and extremely frustrating.
- Increased stress can lead to conflict in relationships, including the parent-child relationship, as well as the relationship of the parents.
- Picky eating can lead to refusal of foods and negative behaviors from the child (screaming, crying, etc.). These behaviors can all increase a parent's stress and frustration, as well as lead to negative feelings and attitudes towards mealtimes and family routines.

When does Picky Eating require help?

- When mealtime becomes frustrating on a daily basis
- When the child is anxious or fearful about eating
- Some sources say: when a child eats fewer than 20 foods
- When weight and nutrition are compromised

What can contribute to Picky Eating?

- Medical issues (acid reflux, other GI disorders)
- Oral Motor issues – trouble with chewing, swallowing, moving tongue
- Sensory processing issues (dislike of textures, smells, tastes); gagging or vomiting
- Severe rigid thinking (e.g. can only eat a certain brand of food)
- Behavior or anxiety issues

Why an Speech-Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist?

- we are trained to work with children who need to make changes
- we have training in the way the sensory system works and how the motor planning and development of chewing and swallowing works
- we have expertise in using behavioral techniques and reinforcement to help kids to make changes

What do feeding therapy sessions look like?

- Exposure to new food by smelling, touching and tasting
- Feeding new or non-preferred foods to others or pets
- Preparing food
- Growing/harvesting food
- Behavior modification
- Oral-motor exercises
- Exposure to positive modeling
- Intake modifications
- Parent Education
- Home-based program development and monitoring

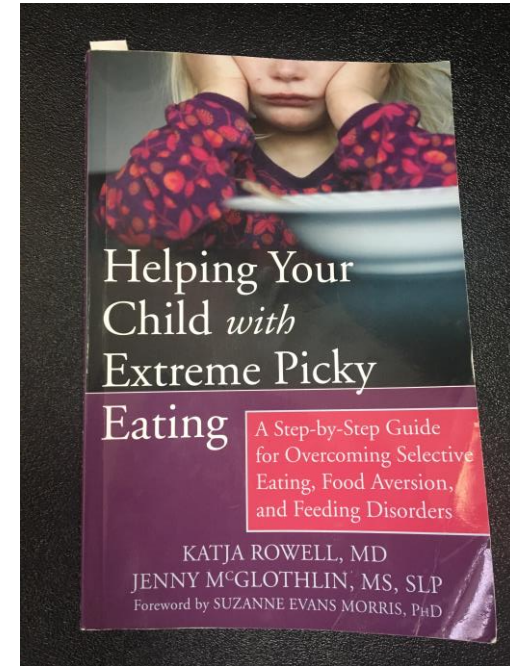
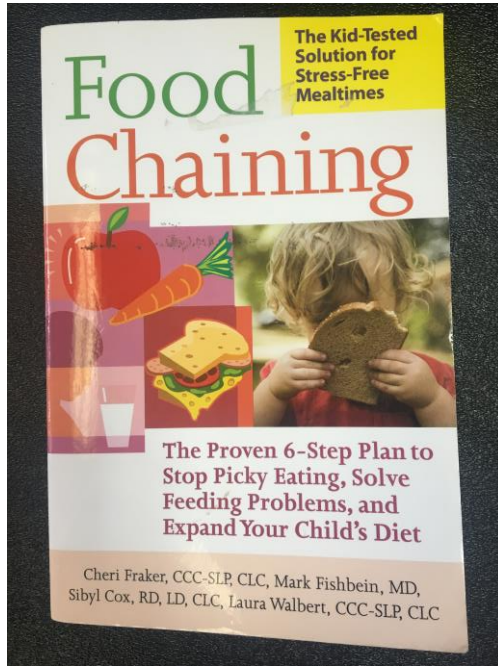
General recommendations for home

- Provide a consistent, positive, encouraging environment.
- Only offer 'new' foods at non-meal time. New foods can be hard and we don't want family meal time to be harder than it already is.
- A shared family meal time at the table with minimal distractions (no TV, phones, etc.)

General recommendations for home

- Emphasize attributes of food, not “like” or “dislike.” We all eat things that are not our favorites sometimes; kids can do the same thing.
- Avoid using preferred foods as a reward.
- Expand expectations at meals slowly and with the guidance of your therapist.
- Limit snacks to 2 per day, one in the morning, one in the afternoon. Avoid grazing throughout the day.
- Keep trying! Kids need to be exposed to a new food at least 10 times before learning to like it!

Helpful Reading



Helpful Websites

www.mymunchbug.com

www.yourkidstable.com

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov>

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers-picky-eating>

Questions?



References

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- Relationships between sensory sensitivity, anxiety and selective eating in children. *Appetite*, 58(3), 842-846. Suarez, M. A. (2015).
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