

PICKY EATING GUIDANCE

Picky eating is the number one concern that many moms have about toddler nutrition. Dr. Jane Heinig from the UC Davis Human Lactation Center did research to learn the reasons behind toddler behavior and how it affects toddler eating and nutrition. Their team determined that healthy, normally developing toddlers go through 6 major changes during this time that can affect their nutritional intake. These do not apply to children with developmental disabilities.

- 1** **Toddlers grow more slowly than when they were infants:** Because they are growing slower than when they were infants, their appetites are growing more slowly also. She will still eat more as she grows but it will take time before she is eating a lot more. It is common for children to eat a lot one day and less the next.
- 2** **Toddlers must practice their new motor skills:** Toddlers are learning to sit up, crawl, stand and walk. These skills take a lot of practice and can be much more interesting than eating. This may cause toddlers to not want to sit still to eat.
- 3** **Toddlers need to practice using their fingers:** Toddlers use their fingers to discover the world and need practice using them. This may cause toddlers to refuse food from a spoon because they want to use their fingers to feed themselves or they may just play with their food using their fingers.
- 4** **Toddlers need family & friends to help them learn:** Toddlers learn a lot by watching other people around them. They will point at something, either because they want it or they just want to hear about it. They will make noises or cry to get your attention so that others can help them learn. They will watch parents and siblings reaction to food and mimic it.
- 5** **Toddlers get better at remembering things:** Toddlers remember things they like and do not like and the roles people play in their life. They may refuse food that they remember they do not like.
- 6** **Toddlers use scripts to predict what is going to happen:** Toddlers remember patterns in their life. When these patterns change, they may become upset. They may get upset and refuse to eat when dad provides breakfast when mom is usually the one that provides it.

For more information about these changes and tips parents can try, [click here](#).

If you have a patient who may be considered a “picky eater” you may refer them to one of our registered dietitians or degreed nutritionists who are able to provided individualized nutrition counseling to improve their intake. At WIC, when a mom states her child is a “picky eater,” we review the 6 big changes toddlers go through and ways to increase caloric intake without Pediasure. For tips on adding calories without Pediasure, please see the following document:

[Pediasure Equivalents Informational Flyer](#)