



5 Best Tips for Mom and Dad

By Lisa Lanzano, RD

"Jason won't eat his vegetables!" Day in and day out, we worry about how to get our kids to eat well for proper nourishment and good health. We may become desperate, bribing our kids with things like M&M's for every bite of vegetables they take, just to get them to eat something nutritious! Don't get down on yourself or feel like a failure as a parent if you have resorted to bribing your child to get them to eat better, or if your child refuses to eat as well as you'd like. You are not alone, and there are some things you can do.

We want to make our children strong and healthy while keeping them safe and happy. Tall task! We have put together the "5 Best Tips for Mom and Dad" to help you better manage the "How can I be a good parent when my child will not eat?" concern.

1. **Remain Objective.** If you fight with your child or they sense a power struggle, you lost. You are the adult and are responsible for giving your children balanced meals and snacks. *Your child doesn't have the innate ability to select the foods they need. Over management of a child means the child will not learn how to manage themselves. Make sure the meal has a variety of healthy foods to choose from, encourage your child to take a bite to taste the food (It may take up to 20 times of being exposed to the food before they develop a taste for it --if they ever do!), and allow your child to experiment, but not be force-fed.*
2. **Food Portion.** Parents are responsible for WHAT the kids eat (safe foods, developmentally appropriate, nutritious options) and kids are responsible for HOW MUCH they eat. Children require at most ½ the portion size an adult requires. The rule of thumb is 1 Tablespoon from each food group for every 1 year of age.
3. **Positive Atmosphere.** One of the best ways to keep a family together is to eat meals together when possible and around the same time each day. Create a rewarding and enticing environment at your dinner table with no TV or distractions. Focus on mealtime as an event where children feel free to engage in friendly conversation without fear of reprimand or emotional turmoil.

4. **Balance.** The more educated a parent is about nutrition – the better the child will eat. Eating with their family and having a balance meal has been linked to children performing at their highest potential. Intuitively, we all know this. A balanced meal is considered balanced when parents serve a variety of healthful foods, including protein, complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables. Low fat is not a requirement for children. However, keep processed foods to a minimum.
5. **Appreciation.** Parent’s lead by example – no words, looks or directives can make the same imprint as the actions of the parents. Parents are responsible for being in the moment – being present and following all the rules that they want their children to follow. Be a positive example for your child. Otherwise, do as I say and not as I do may result in emotional power struggles over food.

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