



8 WAYS TO SUPPORT A PICKY EATER AT HOLIDAY GET TOGETHERS



The following tips were provided by Alex Turnbull, a Registered Dietitian, author, expert in picky eating and introducing solids, recovering perfectionist, cheeseburger lover, and most importantly, a mom of two. Follow Alex on social [@thefamilynutritionist](https://www.instagram.com/thefamilynutritionist) and at myfamilynutritionist.com.

Mealtimes at home are tricky enough, but add in tons of people, a new or different environment, loud noises, and unfamiliar foods and it's the perfect storm for a picky eating nightmare. You are not alone. Here are 8 ways to help make holiday gatherings easier for you and your picky eater.



1 Discuss what they're looking forward to ahead of time, including their favorite foods.

“ Thanksgiving is in a few days! What are you looking forward to the most? ”

2 Talk about what foods will be available ahead of time.

“ We're going to Thanksgiving at Mimi's next week. We're going to have turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, dinner rolls, and pie! What foods sound good to you? ”

3 Start the day off with a balanced breakfast, prioritizing protein and fat to give them fuel for the day in case the meal ahead doesn't interest them.

Menu Ideas:

Scrambled eggs, peanut butter toast, fruit

Yogurt, granola, fruit

Oatmeal, fruit, cheese stick

4 Pack their favorite snacks and make sure to include ones with protein and fat.

Menu Ideas:

Fresh fruits and
veggies

Yogurt pouches

Freeze-dried fruit

Fruit bars

Crackers

Fruit and veggie
pouches

Granola bars

Cereal

5 Bring a reusable water bottle to keep them hydrated.

It's easy to forget to drink water while at holiday gatherings but bringing your own water bottle can help. Pack one for everyone in the family!

6 Bring a side or appetizer you know your kids will eat that's available for everyone.

Most of the time you don't even have to ask, just bring a preferred food you know your child will eat and is familiar with that everyone has access to.

Menu Ideas:

Meat, cheese and crackers

Macaroni and cheese

Dinner rolls

Fresh fruit



7 Avoid making them earn dessert by eating a certain food or amount of food.

Children of parents who practice food restriction, such as only allowing dessert after eating a certain amount of dinner, show signs of disordered eating (including an inability to control themselves around tempting foods, eating when not hungry, and negative emotions around food and eating). They may also show a tendency to eat MORE "unhealthy" foods.*

*Fisher & Birch, 2002; Birch, Fisher, & Davison, 2003; Fisher & Birch, 2000, Loth, 2016

8 Don't stress over how much or how little they eat on these days.

This is ONE day and a day that is typically off schedule and filled with over stimulation. To expect our children to eat and behave like it's a regular day is unrealistic and setting everyone up for failure.

Set boundaries ahead of time, be flexible, and focus on spending time together (whether you enjoy your extended family or not) instead of what or how much your child is eating.

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