

# Food Textures

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## It's a texture thing

We don't just reject foods because of the taste. Sometimes we find certain temperatures, colors, and textures unappealing. Kids are no different. They cite hard, lumpy, slimy, smoochy, and rubbery as reasons for not eating.<sup>1</sup>

That doesn't mean parents have to become caterers or mealtimes have to be battles.

We can work with texture.

# Trying something new

Picky eating peaks between 3.5 and 5.5 years of age. During that time, kids might only eat a few items or might reject new or unappealing foods. Long-term food avoidance can lead to:

- Insufficient nutrition
  - Low calorie consumption
  - Unpleasant family meal times
  - Picky eating as an adult<sup>1</sup>
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## 4 texture preferences

Crunchers like crisp apples, ice cream with nuts or chocolate chunks, crunchy cookies, granola, and nuts.

Chewers like soft brownies, granola bars, and cookies, raisins, cookie dough ice cream, and cheese cubes.

Smooshers like oatmeal, custard, candies with soft centers, ripe bananas, soft fries, and soft-serve ice cream.

Suckers like foods they can keep in their mouths, like hard candies, mints and orange slices.<sup>2</sup>

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## Changing the texture

If your cruncher won't eat yogurt or oatmeal, try tossing some crunchy apples or granola on top. Adding a crunchy topping such as bread crumbs or baked cheese to casseroles might make a meal more appealing.

Chewers might reject foods baked to a crisp or crunchy nuts, calling them too hard. Try offering stovetop pasta, sandwiches with chewy breads, or cooked beans.

A smoosher might find the texture of cooked apples, baked potatoes, and yogurt interesting. They like use their tongues and the roof of their mouths to explore foods. They don't care for sticky or chewy food textures.

Suckers tend to suck flavor out of foods or hold them in their mouths before chewing. Try crisp apple chunks and softer granola bars (like Nutri-Grain bars). They tend to reject chips, oatmeal, and pudding.<sup>2</sup>

**Playing with preparation styles might help your picky eater pick up some new acceptable foods.**

# Sample meal plans\*

\*based on recommendations for a 4-year-old eating 1,500 calories per day

Cruncher	Chewer
<p>Breakfast: Toast with 1 tbsp. crunchy peanut butter. ½ cup apple slices. 1 cup of milk.</p> <p>Lunch: Small toasted panini sandwich with one slice cheese and 2 ounces turkey. 1 cup carrot sticks. 1 cup of milk.</p> <p>Dinner: Taco with 2 ounces of protein (chicken, beef, black beans) in a hard shell with lettuce and salsa.</p> <p>Snack: Trail mix of 1-ounce peanuts and ¼ cup dried cranberries.</p>	<p>Breakfast: 1 slice of toast with 1 tbsp. creamy peanut butter and sliced banana. 1 cup of milk.</p> <p>Lunch: 1 cup of cooked pasta with red sauce (meat, if desired). 1 cup lettuce salad with 1-ounce shaved parmesan and cucumber slices and black beans.</p> <p>Dinner: Soft taco with 2 ounces of protein (chicken, beef, black beans) with lettuce and sliced avocado. 1 cup of milk.</p> <p>Snack: Chewy granola bar.</p>
Smoocher	Sucker
<p>Breakfast: 2 ounces oatmeal with ½ cup of cooked apple chunks and 1 tbsp. creamy peanut butter. 1 cup of milk.</p> <p>Lunch: Half sandwich on soft bread with peanut butter or turkey slices and cheese. 1 cup yogurt with ½ cup of blueberries. 1 cup sliced cucumbers and a tablespoon of hummus.</p> <p>Dinner: 1 cup of <a href="#">fettuccine pasta with sweet potato sauce</a>. Mashed cauliflower.</p> <p>Snack: ½ cup of pudding with fruit.</p>	<p>Breakfast: <a href="#">1 green smoothie</a> with choice of milk, greens, fruit, and fat. 1-ounce whole wheat crackers.</p> <p>Lunch: 1 cup mini pasta shells with meat sauce, if desired. ½ cup orange slices. <a href="#">Nut butter packet</a>.</p> <p>Dinner: 1 ounce of mini pita with hummus. 50 grams yogurt.</p> <p>Snack: Fruit popsicle.</p>

## REFERENCES

1. Nederkoorn C, Jansen A, Havermans RC. Feel your food. The influence of tactile sensitivity on picky eating in children. *Appetite*. 2015;84:7-10. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.014.
2. Jeltama M, Beckley J, Vahalik J. Food texture assessment and preference based on mouth behavior. *Food Quality and Preference*. 2016;52:160-171. doi:10.1016/j.foodqual.2016.04.010