

# Picky Eaters

## And Creating a Healthy Eating Environment

Parents decide **when and what** food is available, the child determines **how much** they eat.

- Do not force a child to eat; instead encourage them to try new things, take one bite, smell the food, touch the food, etc.
- New foods are best experienced through all the senses and incorporating the other senses can help a new food seem less intimidating to a child.
- Food should never be used as a reward or punishment – utilize non-food rewards like hugs, high fives, stickers, etc.
- Praise your child for trying new foods and avoid bribing or threatening them to get them to eat.
- Remember, a child might taste a food 10-20 times before accepting it. If the child rejects a new food the first time, wait a few days and try again.
  - Also, try presenting new foods in different ways – mashed sweet potato versus baked sweet potato versus diced sweet potato versus sweet potato pancakes!

### **Involve the child in the process –**

- Take them to the grocery store and let them pick out the best looking apples or find a new fruit/vegetable they would like to try.
- At home toddlers can help wash produce, peel stickers, and use a child safe knife to help chop soft foods like berries or canned beets.
- Provided a safe space for children to play with their food- imagination and play are powerful tools that help children develop critical skills as adults.