



# Family Nutrition Tips

by Jen DeWall RDN, CSSD, LD. Board-Certified Sports Dietitian



*Jen works with ICyF to provide expert advice on sports nutrition and eating to the students and families of Indianola. As a board-certified sports dietitian, Jen owns a private practice that focuses on helping athletes stay on the cutting edge with superior nutrition to enhance performance with safety and efficacy.*

Healthy eating habits start at home. Exposing your children to a variety of foods when they are young will increase the odds of them enjoying a wider variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein sources when they become adults. Children, youth and teens can pick up very quickly a change in eating styles, especially when they feel restricted. This typically leads to backlash. The following information will provide the most common issues with family eating and tips on how you can overcome these obstacles.

## Picky Eaters

Picky eaters can be frustrating when it comes to eating healthy foods, especially vegetables and fruits. As a dietitian and mom of two, I get it. You don't want your kids living on noodles and chicken nuggets for every meal, but you also don't want them to starve. As frustrating as it may be, the best thing you can do is start *slowly* exposing them to a wide variety of foods and.....BE PATIENT. Here are a few ideas to help with patience.

- Use the 80/20 rule. When exposing your child to fruits, vegetables or other new foods, fill 80% of their plate with foods they are familiar with and enjoy. The other 20% goes to the one new food.
- They should try at least a bite or even a lick before they get seconds of anything else. Don't make them finish the entire serving if they are repulsed. Positive reinforcement is best. Thank them for trying, let them know they don't have to eat the rest and move on. If it's something they like but are just being picky about, a good rule of thumb for younger children may be to eat the same number of bites as your age. So, if a child is three, they need to try three bites.
- In some situations, if the child is resisting everything on the plate. You can always offer *one* alternative. The alternative needs to be the same every time. For example, a plain peanut butter or cheese sandwich. This gives them partial power and prevents you from being a short order cook. If they don't want what you're serving, the alternative is one thing. Remove the entire plate and give them the sandwich. Sometimes they do this for several days but just be patient. When they see you not caring or paying attention, your child will eventually get tired of eating the same sandwich for every meal.

## Not Hungry at Mealtimes. Too many Snacks.

Kids often have a sly way of being "hungry" at the most inopportune times. They're "not hungry" at mealtimes but give it an hour, and they are... "starving." There is a "division of responsibility" that was established by Ellen Satter, creator of Ellyn Satter Institute. You can read more in depth about the division of responsibility in the link below. In summary, the adult decides what, when and where. The child decides how much and whether they eat.

<https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/education/satter-division-responsibility-poster/> (1)

Setting structured meals and snacks is optimal. If kids do not eat their meal, it is perfectly fine to cover their plate, put in the refrigerator and reheat for the next structured snack or meal. If they refuse, then they are not hungry enough. Remember, when given structured feeding opportunities each day, physically and emotionally healthy kids will not starve themselves.



## Too Much Sugar?

Sugar is in everything. Ready to eat cereals, soda, sports drinks, yogurt, pasta sauce and the list goes on. According to the *American Academy of Pediatrics*, persons over the age of two years should not get more than 25 grams of added sugar a day. This is approximately six teaspoons. (2)

Keep in mind, this is *added* sugar, not foods that contain natural sugar. Natural sugar is found in fruit, vegetables, dairy products and some grains. To find out the added sugar in a product, you can look at the nutrition facts label.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

This product contains 2 grams of natural sugar and 10 grams of added. The 2 grams of natural sugar do not count towards the added sugar limit.

Image: FDA.gov

Many parents wonder if sports drinks are a good choice for their active child. In most circumstances, plain water is ideal. Very rarely is a sports drink needed. It only contributes to extra added sugar that kids of all ages do not need. You can add citrus to plain water or buy flavored water that doesn't contain added sugar or artificial sweeteners.

**NOTE:** With multiple nutrition needs in most families, it's not uncommon to have questions or concerns. If you do have questions or concerns, please contact Jen DeWall RDN, CSSD, LD to schedule a complimentary 15-minute sports nutrition coaching call.

Email: [jdewall@nutritioninmotion.info](mailto:jdewall@nutritioninmotion.info)  
 Call/text: 515.343.7241  
[nutritioninmotion.info](http://nutritioninmotion.info)

## References

1. Satter, Ellen. Division of Responsibility Poster. Ellen Satter Institute. 31/07/23. [Ellensatterinstitute.org](http://Ellensatterinstitute.org).
2. Koriath, Trisha. AAP News. American Academy of Pediatrics. 31/07/23. [Publications.aap.org](http://Publications.aap.org).