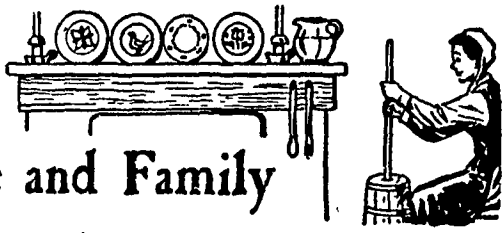


# For the Farm Wife and Family



## Children's Eating Habits

By Mrs. Richard C. Spence

Children's eating habits form early in life, and they usually follow the example set by their parents.

Parents' attitudes toward food, eating and mealtime are often adopted by their children. If mother and dad enjoy a variety of foods, youngsters probably will do likewise. But if parents turn down one kind of food, the child will probably refuse it, too—perhaps this makes him feel more grown-up.

When parents are tired or nervous, children quickly catch the same mood. Such tension at mealtime lessens appetites and slows digestion for the entire family. A few minutes relaxation before meals often will make eating more enjoyable—food will taste better and digest better.

For the same reason, talk about pleasant subjects that interest all the family at mealtime. During meals is a good time to talk to children about play and school.

Children usually like to eat "child-size" bits of food and are more likely to enjoy "child-size" servings—second helpings are better than too much at first. Serve "finger foods" often, too.

Encourage children to serve themselves and to choose between two or more vegetables. Bribing the

child to eat what is good for him—"if you eat all your vegetables, you can have some dessert" gives him the idea that all the meal is unpleasant but dessert. Make the rest of the meal attractive to the child as the dessert.

New foods should be served when children and the rest of the family are in good spirits. The family is more likely to accept and like different dishes at such a time.

### WHY YOUR CHILD WON'T EAT

A child's refusal to eat often comes because he rejects other things besides the food he is served. If you don't pay too much attention to your child some morning, he may strike back by refusing to eat lunch. And this can especially be true if you are in the habit of forcing him to eat when he refuses.

Sometimes a young child will refuse to eat unless his mother is nearby or even unless she feeds him. Rather than actually not wanting food the child wants

the security of his mother while he is eating.

An older child often asserts his independence by refusing to eat. This is especially evident in a teenager's refusal to eat. The teenager also may select a "jitterbug" diet of a hot dog, potato chips, and a cola, not because they particularly want these foods but to break the nutrition pattern they've been brought up on.

Even a toddler may refuse food or to drink his milk. He may really like milk, but he needs to assert his independence so he chooses to refuse something because you are giving it to him.

The best cure for a child's refusal to eat something is for you to let him alone and let him choose what he wants to eat. Of course, you'll have to guard against his eating snacks between meals. But he will probably choose a better diet himself willingly than if you try to force him to eat a good meal.

### HOW ILLNESS AFFECTS YOUR CHILD'S EATING

When your child comes down with a cold and does not feel well, you can expect some minor food problems.

Appetite can be affected to quite an extent when a child isn't feeling well. The sick child may only want bread and milk because these are familiar foods and are fairly bland. He may want to be fed.

Give the child plain foods. Plain egg nogs can be very nourishing and adding cream and ice cream can rouse him.

Loss of appetite can be a protective measure. When the stomach and intestines have recovered, the appetite usually returns. Don't force

food on a sick child unless the doctor wants him to be urged to take liquids or foods. Don't wake him to eat unless the doctor wants you to do this.

Give the child small servings. Nothing can kill appetite any faster than a tray full of food. Give him small bites and let him take his time about eating. Serve the food at moderate temperature, not too hot or too cold. Don't serve strong flavors.

Be honest with the child. Don't be sneaky and put medicine in the food. He may get so he won't eat at all because the medicine flavors the food and it doesn't taste right to him.

Invest in a breakfast tray. Then add some interest such as a new cup, paper flowers

or brills. You can even put sprinkles of colored sugar on the food or parsley on the plate.

Someone should eat with the child. No one likes to eat alone and especially not if you don't feel well. Be cheerful while you're eating and talk about something besides how bad he feels.

### EAT A GOOD BREAKFAST

A good rule for both the children and adults is to eat a Good breakfast. Many studies have shown that those who have an adequate meal before work or school get more done than those who skip or skimp breakfast.

The usual "break" or snack between meals is not a substitute.

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