

Consuming Thoughts

Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension Home Economist For Berks Co.



Just last week your three-year-old couldn't get enough macaroni and cheese. This week he just sniffs it and calls it "Yuck."

Preschoolers often have finicky appetites and nutrition specialists with Penn State Cooperative Extension indicate that such fluctuations are usually normal. Children go through many stages as they grow, and their eating habits are often affected by these stages. It's not unusual for children between one and five to have times when eating doesn't interest them.

Feeding a preschooler is less challenging if parents understand

these growth stages the eating habits that result.

One- to two-year-olds, for example, still are developing their hand-to-eye coordination. You can expect a lot of spills. They just can't prevent it. So don't insist on perfect table manners.

Children are very independent and prefer to feed themselves. Give them bite-size foods that are easy to pick up. This helps youngsters feel more independent. Give your child a choice whenever possible. These choices can be simple and inexpensive, like cooked or raw carrots, scrambled or boiled

eggs, plain peanut butter sandwiches or those combining peanut butter and jelly.

By the time children are three, they may quit eating to get attention. This age group also may experience food "jags." They may want to eat one thing at a time and nothing else. Jags may last a day, a week, or longer.

And then there's the helping stage. Four- to five-year-olds like to set the table, stir and measure, and eat their own cooking projects.

Children like to eat foods they've helped to prepare. Give them a simple job, such as taking apples out of the refrigerator or tearing lettuce for a salad. Kindergartners may also be influenced by television. They want to eat the foods they see advertised. This is a good time to explain nutrition and food choices.

Here are a few other feeding tips for preschoolers.

- Turn off the TV during meals. Children are easily distracted and sometimes forget to finish a meal if the TV set is on.

- Don't argue during meals. Children eat better when they're

calm. Have a few minutes of quiet rest time before eating.

- Make sure children get enough rest and physical activity each day. They may not eat well if they're feeling sleepy or sluggish.

- Children learn eating habits by watching others. They're more likely to try new foods if they see others eating and enjoying them.

- Don't serve children too much food. If you mound food on their plates, it may discourage them. A good rule is to serve a tablespoon of each food per year of age.

- Distract children who refuse

to eat by talking about something besides food. Children have short memories; they may get involved in the conversation and automatically start eating again.

Preschoolers may also refuse to eat if they're ill. When children are active and growing steadily, a small appetite is usually nothing to worry about. However, sometimes it can be a warning. Your child could be ill, tense or worried — especially if there are many arguments in the home. If your child never eats and doesn't seem to be growing normally, see a doctor.

Babysitting Course Offered

CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — Do you wish you could babysit? Young people ages 11-14 are invited to a program that will help prepare them to become a better babysitter. A six-week course, "4-H Babysitting and Child Care" will be offered both at the Bala Cynwyd Library and at the Lansdale Public Library this fall. In Bala Cynwyd the course begins on October 6, and runs for six Thursdays from 4-5:30 p.m., concluding on November 10. In Lansdale, the course runs on Wednesdays, beginning October 19 and ending November 30 from 7-8:30 p.m. In Lansdale, the normal fee of \$5 is being waived at

this time, because of a special grant from the Lansdale Kiwanis Club, who will be sponsoring this course in cooperation with the Montgomery County 4-H Program. There will be no charge at the Bala Cynwyd Library, either, as the Library is sponsoring the course. All course materials will be provided by the 4-H program and participants will become 4-H members as a result of taking the course. Class size is limited to 15 and you must be at least eleven years old to participate. To register for either course please call the respective libraries: Bala Cynwyd: (610) 664-1196; Lansdale: (610) 855-3228.

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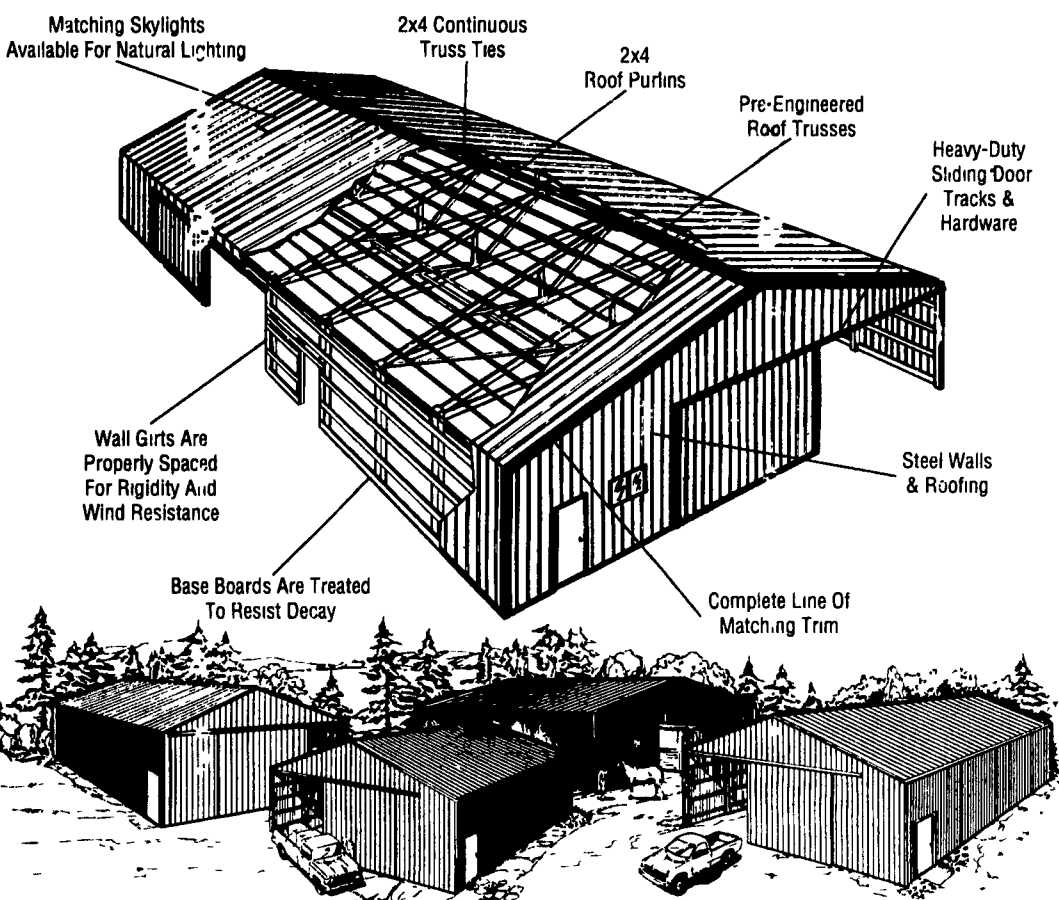
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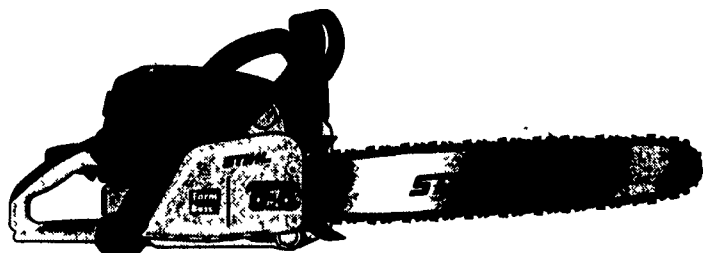


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