How your child can learn to love new foods
Preserving your sanity and your child’s good health

Have you watched your preschooler refuse to eat a new vegetable, and wondered why she is so picky? Serving children more fruits and vegetables helps them to stay healthy, but encouraging children to try a new food can be challenging.

Many preschoolers are not excited about trying something they have not eaten before. They make sense of their world by grouping everything, and they may classify new foods as “things I don’t like” before ever tasting them. Some children need to be exposed to a new food 7 and 15 times before being willing to eat it regularly. Being patient and serving a new food over and over are the best ways to help children decide to try it. Here are some tips to make introducing new foods smoother:

- **Encourage your child to taste the food, but don’t force it.** When parents give an ultimatum, such as “three bites before you leave the table,” children may refuse to try the food as a way of being in control. The next time they see that same food, they may remember the power struggle and refuse to eat.
- **Be a good role model.** Eat the vegetable yourself, so your child can see you consume it. It’s harder to convince children to try something if they see you are not eating it.

### There are no secrets to getting your child to try new foods.

- **Serve new foods family-style.** Place a serving bowl of the new food on the table, and allow family members to serve themselves. This gives children some control over how much is on their plate, and may encourage them to try the new food.
- **Allow your child to explore new foods.** When you serve a new vegetable, talk with your child about what it looks, smells, and tastes like. Encouraging your child to sniff it, and even touch it, may make the new food less mysterious. Use words like crunchy, soft, sweet, and bumpy to describe the feel and taste of the new foods.
- **Remember that children are different.** Your child’s willingness, or unwillingness, to try new foods...
may be part of his personality. Some children are more adventurous, and others are more cautious.

- **Be patient and positive.** Keep introducing the same food every week or two. Even if your child does not eat it the first (or third) time, the food will look less strange and more familiar each time.

- **Be realistic.** Encouraging children to try new foods takes time. Expecting young children to eat and enjoy ten new vegetables in a month may not be reasonable.

### Controlling Asthma

Is your home filled with visitors you didn’t invite? Dust mites, cockroaches, mold spores, chemicals, and other allergens and irritants can trigger asthma attacks. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates about 25 million people suffer from asthma, and around 7 million are children. Asthma is a serious and sometimes life-threatening chronic disease that causes inflammation of the airways. It may be a combination of both genetic and environmental factors. Symptoms include wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and tightness in the chest.

Wipe out most asthma triggers with a little elbow grease and a five-letter verb: CLEAN. To reduce asthma triggers in your home:

- Don’t allow people to smoke indoors.

- Clean hard surfaces with a damp cloth, wash bedding weekly, and vacuum floors and furniture regularly to control dust.

- Reduce pet hair by keeping pets out of sleeping areas and vacuuming weekly.

- To reduce roaches, wipe up food spills immediately, and don’t leave food and water on the counter or in pet food bowls.

- To keep mold out of the bathroom, turn on the fan when showering and wipe down the tub/shower after each use.

There are plenty of other asthma triggers like air pollution, flu, colds, sinus infections, allergies, physical exercise, food additives, and strong fragrances, but a clean house goes a long way in keeping you and your family healthy.

For more information, visit the EPA website (http://www.epa.gov/asthma/) or contact your local county Extension Office (1-800-ASK-UGA1).