

Parents Ask, Experts Answer

Nurturing Happy, Healthy Children

Eating

Sleeping

Potty Problems

Bullies

Peer Pressure

Tantrums

Sibling Rivalry

Manners

Caregiving

Education

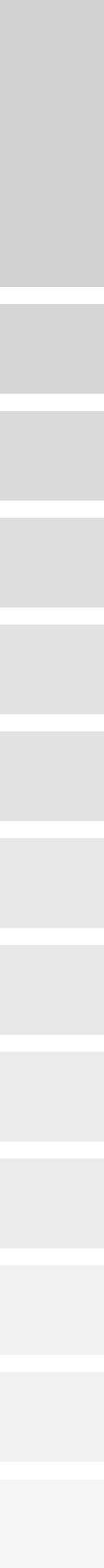
Tina Nocera



Parents Ask, Experts Answer:

Nurturing Happy, Healthy
Children

Tina Nocera



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We do not provide medical advice. The information contained in the Parental Wisdom® website and this book provides a vehicle for parents and caregivers to choose advice that best fits their child and situation. This is not a substitute for professional advice. If you have questions or concerns regarding the physical or mental health of your child, please seek assistance from a qualified healthcare provider.

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Contributor Biographies



Tina Nocera founded Parental Wisdom® after struggling to find answers to her parenting questions. Tina noticed that, although she found an overwhelming amount of information, she couldn't find answers that gave parents a choice. It was like trying to take a drink of water from a fire hose; a person could drown and still be left thirsty. While past generations relied on extended family support systems for parenting help, today's mobile families deal with increased societal issues, cultural diversity, and powerful media and marketing influences. The questions and challenges are more complex, so a single answer from a single expert may not work for all parents. Parental Wisdom lets parents ask questions and receive multiple answers from trusted advisors, so the parents can decide which response is the most appropriate for their unique child and situation.

Tina created and served as editor-in-chief of Viewpoints on Parenting, a national publication for Toys "R" Us. She is the author of *Because Kids Don't Come with Manuals*® and created the Good Parenting Seal^{CM} to help parents evaluate books and CDs. She has presented seminars on Project Imagine!®, a program for middle-school students and their parents; audio broadcasts for the Park Bench® discussion forum; and has created the Happy Tears® merchandise and card line. She has written the Parental Wisdom blog since 2006. Tina has a bachelor of arts degree and master of business administration degree from Chadwick University. She serves as the director of global ecommerce, strategy, and business development for Toys "R" Us.

She lives in New Jersey with her husband, Mike. Her son, Michael, is serving in the U.S. Army, and her daughter, Noelle, works in public relations and lives in New York. Their family's favorite thing to do is to have dinner together when everyone is in town.



Brenda Bercun is a pediatric nurse practitioner, a clinical nurse specialist in child and family mental health, and the author of *I'm Going to Be a Big Brother!* and *I'm Going to Be a Big Sister!* Her website is www.nurturingyourchildren.com.

Trish Booth, MA, is an author, educator, and grandmother. She taught her first childbirth class in 1972. Since then, she has focused on providing supportive education on pregnancy and parenting topics. She has developed classes; created more than seventy-five pamphlets, including the *Staying Positive while Parenting* series; and written several books, including *Pregnancy Q&A*. Trish has trained pre- and postnatal educators, nurses, and doulas in family-centered care and infant competencies. Currently, she is a medical education process consultant and web editor. She delights in being Gram to her five grandchildren.



Mark J. Borowski, MS, is a speaker and coach in the areas of leadership and parenting. He started his own business, The Learning Interface, in 1999, when his first daughter was born, so he could be a part-time at-home dad. His experience with his children inspired him to publish *Big Slick Daddy: Poker Strategies for Parenting Success* in 2007, utilizing the language and strategies of poker to connect with dads in a unique way. His book was awarded the Good Parenting Seal from Parental Wisdom, where he contributes as an advisor and helps parents meet their daily challenges.



He continues to enjoy his corporate work in leadership development as well as his work with parents. He understands the similarities between the roles and believes that great leadership with a lasting legacy starts in the home. His websites are found at www.NewLookOfLeadership.com and www.BigSlickDaddy.com.

Charlotte Cowan, MD, is a board-certified pediatrician. She trained at and practiced for many years at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) for Children, where she remains on staff. During her clinical years at MGH, she served on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. Additionally, Dr. Cowan has completed a fellowship in medical ethics at the University of Chicago and is a current fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Find her website at www.drhippo.com.





Naomi Drew is recognized around the world for her work in conflict resolution and peacemaking. She is the award-winning author of several books, including *No Kidding About Bullying*. Her book *Learning the Skills of Peacemaking* was one of the first to introduce peacemaking into public education. Her work has enabled families, educators, and children to live these skills on a daily basis. Her website is located at www.learningpeace.com.



Georgianna Duarte, PhD, is a professor in the department of teaching, learning, and innovation at the University of Texas, Brownsville. Her research areas include language and play in bilingual environments, language and outdoor play, mentoring, and curriculum in international settings. She teaches courses in curriculum in early childhood education; parent, family, and community partnerships; and early childhood environments.



Ellen Gibran-Hesse is a parent educator, life coach, attorney, and single mother.



Barbara Gilmour is the creator and executive director of Cool Kind Kid, the developer of Cool Kind Kid social skills and anti-bullying educational materials. She was raised in a family where good social skills were taught and practiced. She has a bachelor of science degree from Pennsylvania State University, where she also received etiquette instruction. In the mid-1990s, she spent a year researching and writing two ten-hour courses, *Manners for Kids 8-12* and *Manners for Teens*. She started a business teaching these courses locally and spent several years expanding the content of the courses for younger children to include character values, anti-bullying materials, and the Cool Kind Kid concept. This content has been incorporated into the Tanner's *Manners: Be a Cool Kind Kid* music and educational materials for elementary-age children. Her materials help children learn to reject bullying and equip them with the social skills needed for successful futures. Visit her website at www.coolkindkid.com.

Sally Goldberg, PhD, is a Cornell graduate and specialist in the field of early childhood education. She has been helping parents and teachers for many years. As a professor of education, Dr. Sally branched out to become an author and a frequent guest on TV and radio. She now focuses her energy daily online at Parenting Tips with Dr. Sally, www.earlychildhoodnews.net/parenting-tips.



Ilyse M. Gorbunoff, MS, is a pre-K and kindergarten curriculum coach and has been an educator for more than thirty years. She believes that passion is the key ingredient to being a successful educator. She relishes opportunities to encourage and support other teachers so that they can bring the same excitement and dedication to their students.



She and her husband have raised three wonderful, strong, independent, and kind young men. She is proud of them each and every day and is excited to share some of what she has learned along the way.

Dr. Tom Greenspon is a psychologist, marriage and family therapist, and author. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from Yale and a PhD in psychology from the University of Illinois. After a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Rochester, he joined the faculty of the medical center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he was involved in teaching, research, and counseling.



Tom lectures and writes on a variety of topics, including couples' and family relationships and the emotional needs of gifted children and adults. He is a member of several professional organizations, has authored a monograph on adolescent-adult relationships for the Unitarian Universalist Association, and a number of his articles have appeared in professional journals. His first book, *Freeing Our Families from Perfectionism*, has won the National Parenting Publications Gold Award and a Parents' Choice Award.

Ashley Hammond is the founder and owner of Sports Domain Academy (SDA). His love for teaching the game of soccer has taken him all over the world, and he hopes to share his passion through SDA's dedication to excellence. See his website at www.sdamontclair.com.





Christine Hierlmaier Nelson is a writer and mother of two beautiful girls. Her pre-K children's book, *Green Yellow Go! Nat Knows Bananas*, teaches children about patience, time, and colors. Christine uses her training in communications to share with parents, early childhood educators, and child care providers why patience is a critical skill for raising and nurturing successful children. Her book and insights have been featured in *Parents* magazine, *Redbook*, *First for Women*, and on the BAM! radio network. Find her book and blog at www.patientparents.com.



Norman Hoffman, PhD, is a forensic mental health evaluator.



Dr. Steven Kairys is chairman of the department of pediatrics at the Jersey Shore University Medical Center.



Michelle P. Maidenberg, PhD, MPH, LCSW-R, CGP, is the president and clinical director of Westchester Group Works, www.WestchesterGroupWorks.com.



Jack Marcellus is president of The Focus Academy, www.thefocusacademy.com.



Aileen McCabe-Maucher is the author of *The Inner Peace Diet*. She is a licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist who has helped many people find inner peace and discover their unique life purposes. Aileen has worked for more than fifteen

years to provide individual and group counseling to a diverse client population. She is a graduate of West Chester University, Widener University, the University of Delaware, and the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Philadelphia at Bryn Mawr College. Aileen is a registered yoga teacher with Yoga Alliance. She is currently pursuing a doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania and is writing her third book. Visit Aileen's website at www.theinnerpeacediet.com.

Brenda Nixon, MA, is a parenting speaker and author. She empowers audiences with information and affirmation on child rearing. Visit her blog at www.BrendaNixonOnParenting.blogspot.com.



Dr. Vicki Panaccione is an internationally recognized child psychologist, parenting expert, speaker, parent coach, media specialist, consultant, author, and radio personality. She has dedicated her career to working with hundreds of children and helping thousands of parents raise happy, successful kids. Dr. Vicki is the author of *What Kids Would Tell You . . . If Only You'd Ask!* and *Your Child's Inner Brilliance*. She is frequently quoted in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Parents*, *Parenting*, and *Woman's Day*, as well as on websites such as Newsday, Good Housekeeping, Forbes, WebMD, iParenting, and Love to Know. She is featured on a weekly parenting show on Heartbeat Radio for Women and serves as a parenting consultant for ParentalWisdom.com and Nickelodeon's ParentsConnect.com. She is proudest of being Alex's mom. Her son graduated from Emory University and is currently a graduate student at Vanderbilt University, doing cancer research at Yale University toward his doctorate in cancer biology.



Janet Price, MEd, MA, has clinical experience working with children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families. Before choosing a career in clinical psychology, Janet worked for more than thirty years in the fields of early childhood and special needs. Visit www.vpa-psychologist.com/Psychologists.html.



Elinor Robin, PhD, is a Florida Supreme Court-certified mediator and mediation trainer. Her area of expertise is professional and personal relationship conflict, especially in divorce, family estrangement, the workplace, and business partnership. She earned a PhD in psychology with a



specialization in conflict management and is licensed as both a mental health counselor and marriage and family therapist. Over the last twenty-four years, Elinor has taught mediation to more than twelve thousand professionals and has mediated thousands of disputes. She is a member of the Florida Supreme Court's mediator qualifications board, a contract mediator with the U.S. Postal Service's REDRESS Mediation Program, a past president of the Association of South Florida Mediators and Arbitrators, executive vice president of Mediation Training Group, Inc., and a lead mediator with A Friendly Divorce, Inc. She has been quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, *NY Daily News*, *FoxBusiness.com*, *CNN.com*, *Entrepreneur.com*, and various other media. Visit www.ElinorRobin.com, www.AFriendlyDivorce.com, or www.MediationTrainingGroup.com to learn more.



Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, is the founder of the Child-Centered Divorce Network, where parents can access her free articles, ezine, blog, coaching services, and other valuable resources to help them create the most positive outcome for their family before, during, and after divorce. She is the author of *How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children—With Love!* Visit www.childcenteredddivorce.com to learn more.



Amy Sherman is a therapist, author, seminar facilitator, and licensed mental health counselor focusing on the issues related to the population of adults over forty, including dealing with adolescents and teens and young-adult children. Visit her website at www.bummedoutboomer.com.



Sharon Silver helps parents bridge the gap between the logical adult world, the emotional world of children, and the reality of everyday life. She is a parent educator and has been a facilitator for The Cline Fay Institute and Redirecting Children's Behavior programs. She is the author of *Stop Reacting and Start Responding: 108 Ways to Discipline Consciously* and *Become the Parent You Want to Be*. She contributes to <http://askmoxie.org> and www.themomentpreneur.com. Learn more at www.proactiveparenting.net.

Eleanor P. Taylor, MS, has spent her nursing career in preventive medicine, including twenty years as director of a hospital-based wellness center. She holds a masters degree in family health nursing and has national certifications as a diabetes educator, lifestyle counselor, and health education specialist. Her main focus has been on nutrition and lifestyle modification. Ellie is the co-author of two books: *Feeding the Kids: The Flexible, No-Battles, Healthy Eating System for the Whole Family* and *Feeding the Kids Workshops: Raising Happy, Healthy Eaters*. She lives in Clemson, South Carolina. Visit her website at www.FeedingTheKids.com.



Jim Taylor, PhD, is an internationally recognized authority on the psychology of performance. He works with CEOs and senior management of companies around the world, professional and world-class athletes, and other high achievers.



Mark D. Viator, PhD, LPC-S, is a licensed and nationally certified counselor.

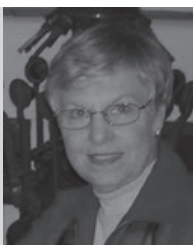


Penny Warner has published more than sixty books for adults and children. She holds a bachelor's degree in child development and a master's degree in special education. She teaches child development at a local college and has appeared on television featuring ideas from her books, including the PBS series, *Parent Sense*, the *Later Today* show, HGTV, and dozens of others. She pens a weekly newspaper column on family life. She has two grown children and four grandchildren.



Pamela Waterman is president of Metal Mouth Media, home of the award-winning Braces Cookbooks blog, www.MetalMouthMedia.net/wired-in.





Janet Whalley, RN, IBCLC, is a nurse, lactation consultant, breastfeeding educator, and author. Her work has focused on helping new families since 1975, when she began teaching birth and breastfeeding classes. She teaches breastfeeding classes for Great Starts at Parent Trust and is a co-author of two books: *Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn* and *The Simple Guide to Having a Baby*. Her work with Beyond Birth Seattle includes providing telephone counseling, teaching a Breastfeeding 911 class, and making home visits to help with breastfeeding problems. She enjoys working with new families and loves being a grandmother.



Derick Wilder is a dad; children's-book author; director for Playball, a child development organization; and founder of Reading Giraffe, a literacy initiative. Visit his website at www.DerickWilder.com.



Beverly Willett is a writer and mother of two. She has written for *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Woman's Day*, *Family Circle*, *Prevention*, The Huffington Post, Salon.com, *Parenting*, and The Daily Beast, among others. She is a former contributing editor to *Chicken Soup for the Soul* magazine and has written articles for the Toys "R" Us publication *Viewpoints on Parenting*. She is co-chair of the Coalition for Divorce Reform and is currently at work on her first book. Before becoming a writer, Beverly practiced entertainment and copyright law in New York City. Visit her website at www.beverlywillett.com.



Jill Wodnick is a national speaker as a Lamaze childbirth educator, certified lactation counselor, and birth doula. She supports families through prenatal education, prenatal yoga, and the wonder of giving birth and being born. Blending public policy and interpersonal support, Jill works on health-equity topics and the role of doulas to reduce perinatal disparities through a task force for Medicaid coverage of doulas. Jill has taught undergraduates, graduate students, health professionals, and hundreds of expectant parents on evidence-based, mother-friendly, baby-friendly maternity care. She is part of the World Organization of Perinatal Educators seeking to prevent all forms of violence. Part of One Million Women Drumming, Jill lives in Montclair, New Jersey, with her family and can be found singing, drumming, baking, and playing board games. Visit her website at www.JillWodnick.com.

Introduction

Imagine a job more difficult and important than being the president of the United States, with ninety-one required skills, no formal training or feedback mechanism, and a never-ending supply of contradictory advice. Welcome to parenthood!



BC (Before Children), we were observers, possibly believing parents lacked our level of organization and control. We were certain that when we became parents it would be different. Our children would be little angels, and we would not be the sleep- and shower-deprived, clueless people who allow three-year-olds to hold them hostage for a cookie. No, not us.

How could we have been so wrong?

When you become a parent, you assume other parents must have it all figured out, but there is no decoder ring or secret handshake. No matter how similar other children or situations may seem to your own, often they are not. Your unique child lives within your unique family and the values and culture you create. And, when you finally get to a comfort level of understanding with your first child, you find that the knowledge doesn't scale with your second as you thought it would. Each child is unique.

Most new (and experienced) parents get advice by asking their moms, friends, sisters, brothers, neighbors, doctors, or co-workers how to handle a situation.

If you bungle raising your children, I don't think whatever else you do well matters very much.
—Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

That approach is flawed for a number of reasons:

- What if the person offering advice hasn't had experience with the situation you're dealing with? Our moms didn't raise us in the same media- and marketing-intense world that we face now.
- What if you don't agree with the advice that is offered? Relationships are often compromised when different parenting styles come to light.
- Will you have to report back to the person who offered advice? When does the conversation end? Can you guarantee your question won't be a topic of discussion with others?
- What if you talk with a professional but get advice that just doesn't feel right? Because that person has an advanced degree, does that mean she knows better than you do?
- Most important, what if your child does something you simply don't want to share? Now where can you go for advice?

When my own children were little, I read the books and realized that, even though experts had credentials and solid opinions based on research, I did not agree with a single expert's advice all the time. Recognizing the need for something different, something better, something tangible, I created Parental Wisdom™ because kids don't come with manuals™.

Parental Wisdom provides a patented method of offering advice from child-development experts in response to parent questions. Because parents know their children best, Parental Wisdom lets them choose the advice that best fits with their individual circumstances.

As Dr. Benjamin Spock famously said, "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do." The Parental Wisdom concept gives parents confidence by offering the advice of multiple, caring, and trusted professionals. There may be several right answers and several ways to say something, but in the end, you have to be comfortable with the way you are handling a situation with your child. This book offers expert advice on a number of common parenting and child-development questions. Find the questions you are facing, and read the responses. Then, decide on the approach that works best for your child, your family, and your situation. We hope you find this book helpful on this wonderful journey called parenting.

Tina Nocera, Founder

Parental Wisdom®

www.parentalwisdom.com

Daily Dilemmas:

Eating, Sleeping, and Potty Problems

Q My two-year-old daughter will sit with us at the table and eat—usually.

Should I have her eat if she doesn't want to? Should I force her to try new foods? Should I make her sit there until her plate is clean or until she's eaten two bites of peas? If she asks to leave the table before her father and I are finished eating, do I let her?



Eleanor Taylor

Your daughter is probably too young to tolerate sitting at the table for long periods, and it's typical for two-year-olds to want to eat and go. Offer her small amounts of all the foods you are eating, and when she is done, happily excuse her from the table. You might want to include one of her favorite foods at each meal, if you know that she won't like anything else being served. The important thing is that she enjoys her experience eating at the table with the family and that she is not pressured to eat foods she does not like. Two-year-olds often eat small meals, with about 20 percent of their nutritional needs met by snacks. Plan a healthy snack schedule, so she will be hungry when she comes to the table for a meal.

Janet Price

Your question touches on one of the areas of parenting that can spark the most angst, frustration, and potential long-term challenges: our responsibility to make sure our child is healthy and on our values and traditions about meals. When two parents are involved, there are two sets of values and

rituals influencing these decisions. At first glance, this arena may seem straightforward, but it is really quite complex. You are wise to be thinking about how you want to handle this now so that your daughter's eating time can be enjoyable, positive, and healthy. The number one goal is to make eating an enjoyable time. Provide as much calm and relaxation around mealtime as possible.

Two-year-olds need structure during eating time. Be consistent about when meals are served. A high chair or child chair can provide external boundaries that help them keep their bodies at the table. Toddlers also need caregivers to decide what and how much food is placed in front of them at one time. Your daughter is letting you know how much food she actually needs.

As far as keeping her at the table when she indicates her desire to leave, what is important here is for your daughter to begin to learn that eating happens at the table. When she gets down from her chair, her eating time is over. This consistent response from you will help her begin to pay attention to what her body is telling her about being full or still hungry. Young children can be easily distracted by things other than eating. It will undoubtedly take time for her to learn to recognize when she really is full and finished with her meal.

I do not recommend forcing young children to eat food they are refusing. It creates power struggles that can make eating time miserable for everyone and has no redeeming value. Developmentally, two-year-olds are experimenting with independence. So, trying to make your daughter eat provides her an opportunity to flex her newfound skill of saying no and to progress to a full-blown temper tantrum if her no is not respected.

Many of us were told to eat everything on our plates. Raising a child with the expectation of eating everything on her plate keeps her from noting when she is full. The practice can contribute to overeating, which then is likely to cause other food-related problems, such as difficulty in maintaining a healthy weight.

If your child chooses to leave the table while you and your husband are still eating, encourage her to have quiet, play-alone time while you finish your meal. If you have a play area near where you eat, she can play by herself until you are done. Your child's ability to play independently will affect how long you can continue once she has left the table.

I say absolutely no forcing. That's a no-win thing to do and only creates power struggles. Your best teaching tool is your good example and your ability to catch her in the act of doing things right. Offer her food, and encourage her to eat it. Praise her when she does, and tell her what a big girl she is. But, if she doesn't want to eat, let it be. Under no circumstances should you force her to sit there until her plate is clean. Doing so will make her dread mealtime and will make her resistant and resentful. Make mealtimes warm, pleasant, and loving.

In terms of leaving the table before you and her dad are finished, remember that she's only two. Have her sit there for a reasonable amount of time; then, tell her she's excused. In time, if mealtimes are pleasant and loving, she will be able to sit there for longer and longer periods. Try to find something at each meal to praise her for—using her fork, eating whatever she eats, or sitting nicely in her chair. Remember that sincere praise is far more powerful than threats and reprimands.



Q

My toddler won't eat the same food as the rest of the family. How can I deal with that?

Pamela Waterman

Toddler-time is all about trying new things and asserting opinions. The common thought is that it can take ten tries before a child makes a decision about liking a new food. The texture, color, flavor, and temperature can all be different from what he's dealt with before, so it can just take patience and time. But, don't let that stop you from trying. Give the child one item that the rest of you are having—one new thing to try at each meal. Gradually transition from toddler foods as new foods are accepted. Some children will see what's on your plate and want it, just because they don't have it! As they get older, keep working at it, and praise them when they make progress.

As the child gets older, if he does not like what is served, he can always make a peanut-butter sandwich (assuming no allergies). Also, as he gets older, look at pictures of foods together and try recipes from cookbooks and magazines. In the grocery store, ask him if he sees something you could try together. And take heart—few children go to college these days only eating Cheerios.

Tina Nocera

I'm sure it won't help to say most parents have the same issue that you're dealing with when mealtimes are more about tantrums, screaming, and bribery than healthy eating. Fussy eating is a normal phase in your toddler's development. It will get better with time. Just try not to get anxious about it because it might make the problem worse.

Your toddler might not be able to take in all the calories you would like. His stomach is quite small, and he knows when he has had enough. There are obvious things you can do to get him to eat, such as not giving your child snacks too close to mealtimes and presenting bite-size foods in small containers. Don't worry so much about what your toddler eats in a day. Instead, think about what your toddler eats over a week.

Ilyse Gorbunoff

The most important thing to do is to try not to make food a battle. What worked for me is to be sure to have a family dinner each night. If you eat together, your toddler will be exposed to many foods and everyone else enjoying them. Present a variety of foods at each meal, and be sure to include at least one or two things you know your toddler will eat. Offer him some of everything, but try not to react when he refuses. When my kids were little, they were all picky. One liked starches; another liked proteins, such as chicken and burgers; and the third liked fruits and veggies. So, I always served a dinner with all the components. I usually had some chicken nuggets cooked and waiting or made a PB and J in case nothing else worked. I indulged special orders, such as no sauce or peas but no carrots. As we ate, my husband and I raved about our meal. After a while, the children began to ask for tastes, and before we knew it they became great eaters.

Christine Hierlmaier Nelson

Offer him food. If he won't eat it, then he will be very hungry soon and more willing to eat it later. It usually only takes a day or two before the child realizes that the food on the plate is what's for dinner. If you have been making special meals for him up to this point, it may take longer for him to understand that the practice has changed. Try to explain that big boys or girls eat like this now, if you really want to stop making special meals. He won't starve, especially if you

are offering water and juice with the meal and snacks at other times, but he will learn a new routine of eating with the family.

Q I have been trying to get my three-year-old daughter to eat what we are serving for dinner rather than make special meals for her. With much coaxing, she will usually try what we are having, but she then gags and spits it out. I tell her that this is our meal, and she usually goes to bed without eating much. In the morning, she is starving and begging for breakfast. I do try to serve at least one thing she likes at each meal and fit in things she likes throughout the week, such as spaghetti or sloppy joes, but how can I get her to broaden her food horizons so we can have a wider menu?



Pamela Waterman

First, you are doing all the right things—take heart! Some children will carry on like this for years, and parenting does require compromise. Children will not starve themselves, and they do change. Next year, she may start to like a food that she spit out last week. The fact that there is always one thing that she likes is a great happy medium. You can also “beef up” her breakfasts, trying different items that will fill her up then, instead of at night. As long as her doctor says she is doing well, she’ll be fine. You may also be surprised when, one day, she asks for what is on your own plate, out of curiosity! For fun, try reading her the wonderful book *Gregory the Terrible Eater* by Mitchell Sharmat.

Penny Warner

Children at this age are very sensitive to the tastes and textures of foods. You can keep offering her a variety of foods to try, but it may take time before she likes anything new. In the meantime, offer her larger portions of her favorite foods, small portions of the new foods you want her to try, and frequent snacks throughout the day. Children have small appetites (and small tummies) but get hungry more frequently due to their high energy levels. As she grows and develops, she’ll begin to join you in your meals, but for now, be flexible and continue to offer her the foods she likes, perhaps with other foods, such as veggies, mixed in surreptitiously.

Trish Booth

Family dinners have two parts: the food and the enjoyable experience of eating together. When you put too much emphasis on eating what is served, the pleasure of being together suffers. Children can create an exhausting, emotional scene if you focus only on eating the food served. Most children go through phases of picky eating. When that happens, it is easy to worry about how much your child eats. However, it is not helpful to limit family dinner to only those foods your daughter likes. Accommodate her preferences by having one food item she likes at each dinner. Spaghetti and sloppy joes have a tomato-based sauce in common. Try serving other dishes that have a similar sauce. You can also make main dishes that have other kinds of sauces. When you serve sauceless main dishes, offer her a dip, such as plain yogurt, ranch dressing, ketchup, salsa, or anything else she likes. Keep serving a new food as often as you and other family members want to have it. Serve your daughter a small

bit of it and encourage—but don't force—her to eat it. Because she is hungry at breakfast, try using that time to introduce new flavors and textures. Often having a child help prepare part of the meal makes the meal more palatable. Try that approach when you have the energy and patience to let her help. As long as you serve healthy foods, your daughter will be eating healthy foods. She won't starve herself. If you want, add a daily multiple vitamin for that reassurance.

Beverly Willett

I know you're frustrated, but it actually sounds like you're handling everything well. (I'm assuming you've checked with your pediatrician and your daughter is healthy and actually getting enough to eat.) Children develop and broaden their tastes when they're ready. Continue gently encouraging her and gradually testing and adding in new foods. This phase won't last forever. My youngest daughter used to be the original chicken-nuggets or peanut-butter-and-jelly-sandwiches girl. You should see the amazing cook she is today!



Q How do I address the issue and importance of nutrition to my son and daughter-in-law without appearing meddlesome? When our grandson is with us, he seems to eat all the time, so I'm not even sure that is the problem. He is sixteen months old and is still wearing clothing that fits nine-month-olds. His parents are slightly below average in size themselves. In the last four months, our grandson has grown one inch and has gained one pound. The doctor said she won't be very concerned unless she doesn't see a growth spurt by his second birthday. I'm not sure they should wait that long to see if there is a problem. Other than his size, he is developing well—walking, speech, coordination, and so on. Should we be concerned?

Michelle Maidenberg

First, if you are concerned, then you are concerned. As grandparents, it is okay to express concerns as long as it is done respectfully and mindfully. What you need to assess is how open your son and daughter-in-law are to you expressing your concerns. How have they reacted to it in the past? What would be the best way to communicate so that they are able to effectively hear you? If you bring it up, what support can you offer them?

Once you have established all of that, try starting the conversation with what they are doing right and how wonderfully they are raising your grandson. When you speak about what is concerning you, use an *I* statement such as, “I am concerned about him because he hasn’t grown all that much lately.” Tell them that according to the growth chart you’ve looked at, you are aware that he is progressing slowly. Ask, “Is that an accurate evaluation I’m making, or is it possible that I’m seeing it all wrong?” Offer to go to the bookstore with them to buy books on infant nutrition, to give them magazine clippings when you find anything pertinent and interesting, or to attend pediatrician appointments if they would like to have you there.

Janet Whalley

Your grandson’s growth is slower than most toddlers, but that does not necessarily mean that there is a problem. The most reassuring comment you mentioned was from the doctor. She is aware of the problem and will be following up at his later visits. If you remain concerned, you could ask your son to talk to the doctor at the next visit and ask about what would be done if the growth problem remains at age two.

Then, if he wishes, he could ask if they should do something sooner. The fact that your grandson is developing normally in other domains is reassuring. As children mature they grow in several different domains—physical, mental, social, small-muscle coordination, and large-muscle coordination. It seems that when a child is growing in one domain, the others often lag behind. That could be the case for your grandson. Or he may always be smaller than his peers.

It sounds like your son and daughter-in-law have told you about talking with the doctor, so they may have some concerns, too. I would talk to them about what they are doing to promote their son’s growth. Though the growth delay might not be related to your grandson’s diet, you could ask if they are giving him any

special foods and try to offer those at your home, too. It's okay to tell your son about his eating patterns as a little boy and how you tried to offer a variety of good foods. Then you can talk about what you think are the best foods. Avoid telling them what to do, just tell them about your experiences. Keep the lines of communication open so they will talk to you about your grandson's next health report.

If your son and daughter-in-law are reading a book or an Internet site about feeding toddlers, ask to read it, too. It's helpful to learn about common eating patterns for toddlers. A few characteristics come to mind: Toddlers like to snack more than they like to sit down for a big meal. Because they are working on fine-motor skills, toddlers love finger foods. They may show certain food preferences, but they benefit from having a variety of foods at different times of the day. A good diet for toddlers is like a good diet for older children and adults and includes a variety of vegetables and fruits. Many toddlers like their vegetables slightly steamed rather than raw. To provide whole grains, toddlers love having a small bowl of their favorite dry cereal—though it needs to be a nutritious one. Toddlers often like cheese sticks, easily chewed bites of meat, and plenty of milk. Being a grandparent is joyful, but like parenting, it can also be challenging. Best wishes.

Charlotte Cowan

One of the gold standards in pediatric care is that height and weight (and head circumference until about age three) is measured at every well visit. What matters most is the child's growth along his own growth curve. I would not wait until a child is two years old to assess whether a problem might be present. It will be interesting and important to see what your grandson's weight and height are at his eighteen-month well visit. If he is falling off his growth curve, then it would be appropriate to ask why.

Another more subtle question is how much you can suggest to the parents of your grandchildren without being obtrusive or threatening your relationship. Every family is different. I suspect that it would be smart to air your concerns once. Suggest that your grandchild's growth be brought to the attention of the pediatrician, and leave it at that. Your child will come back to you for advice when and if he wants to.

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Tina Nocera has written the Parental Wisdom blog since 2006. Tina has bachelor of arts and master of business administration degrees from Chadwick University. She serves as the director of global ecommerce, strategy, and business development for Toys "R" Us. She lives in New Jersey with her husband, Mike. Her son, Michael, is serving in the U.S. Army, and her daughter, Noelle, works in public relations in New York.



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