



# Mealtime Memo

## for Child Care

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## Conquering Picky Eating with Nutrition Education Activities

Picky eating is a common behavior among young children. Some children are naturally sensitive to certain textures or smells. Other children are afraid to try new foods and would much rather eat familiar foods. As a child care provider, picky eating can be a challenge that may seem impossible to manage. Fortunately, when you introduce new foods with fun or interesting nutrition education activities and serve meals that look and taste good, young children are more likely to try and like new foods.

Introducing nutrition education to young children on a regular basis will help them grow accustomed to learning about new foods.



Understanding it can take some children 10 to 15 tries before they like new foods, it is important to make the first introduction of the new food the best introduction. When first introducing a new food to young children, make it fun, exciting, and enjoyable.

Begin by incorporating a nutrition component to your current curriculum, such as the

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## Conquering Picky Eating with Nutrition Education Activities

National Food Service Management Institute's *More Than Mud Pies*. This resource can be found at <http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=247>. *More Than Mud Pies* is a nutrition-based curriculum designed to provide seasonal-based nutrition education activities. It incorporates games, props, and additional activities to help young children want to try new foods.

Build on the curriculum by allowing the children to have major roles in the activities. A great way for children to participate is to allow them to help prepare simple snacks or meals. They can stir foods or tear lettuce for a personal salad. Give children the opportunity to plant seeds in a cup, bucket, or an outdoor garden to help them understand how foods grow. Invite the local farmer or librarian to the child care facility to talk about different types of foods. During all activities, talk about the importance of choosing healthy foods. Ask open-ended questions, such as, "What does it smell like?" or "What does it feel like?" The more involved children are in learning about foods, the more likely they will try the new foods.

When the new food item is served, it should look and taste good. Ensure the food is easy to identify, so that the children can easily recognize the food from the activities. When possible, serve favorite foods with new foods; however, it is important to serve only one new food at a time. Set the example for young children by eating the new food with the children as they are more likely to try foods when those around them are eating the food. Remember, the more involved you are in creating an environment for healthy eating habits, the higher the possibility that children will try and like new foods.

For more information on picky eating, check out ChooseMyPlate.gov's, "Health and Nutrition for Preschoolers: Picky Eating" at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/picky-eaters.html>.



### Nutrition Tip

October is a time when the weather and colors start to change; the smell of burning leaves and the autumn breeze fill the air. October is also a time when large amounts of candy and sweet treats are regularly stocked on the supermarket shelves due to holidays and festivities. Start the season off right with healthy holiday treats. Instead of offering large amounts of sugary foods, offer healthy alternatives, such as fresh fruits and vegetables cut into festive shapes, homemade fruit leathers wrapped in festive bags, or yummy low-fat smoothies served in festive cups.

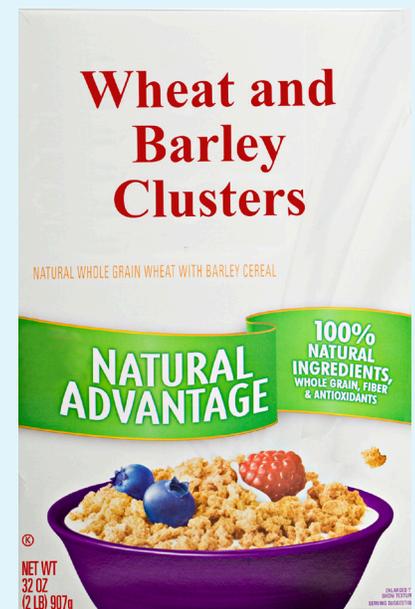


## Fruit of the Month Cranberries

Cranberries are small, round, red fruits commonly associated with seasonal recipes. Native to North America, cranberries are named because their flowers resemble cranes. They are packed full of essential nutrients, such as vitamin C and fiber. In addition, they are free of fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Cranberries are more widely available September through December. Choose cranberries that are firm, without shriveling or signs of decay. They can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two months and can be frozen to enjoy all year long. As a tasty snack, serve yogurt with cooked cranberries.

## Nutrition Fact

The “natural” claim is appearing on numerous food items in the grocery store. The food industry uses the “natural” claim for foods containing minimum processing. For example, some cereals, soups, or even beverages may list natural on the front of the food package. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), it is difficult to define the term “natural” because most foods are processed and no longer in the natural state as a product of the earth. However, the FDA does not object when “natural” is defined as a food that does not contain added color, artificial flavors, or synthetic substances.



# References

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