

DELAWARE Parent

www.delawareparent.com

Got a picky eater?

Foods for argument

Several factors explain why your child may be a picky eater

BY CHRISTINE FACCIOLA | PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUCHAT PEDERSON

What parent hasn't worried when a child turns her nose up at dinner or seems to live on macaroni and cheese for weeks on end?

Relax. If the child is alert and active and staying on her growth curve, there's no cause for alarm.

Most parents have faced off across the dinner table with a picky eater, experts say. Picky eating habits typically emerge as a child enters the toddler years. These habits tend to diminish between age 4 and 5, although they can persist into puberty.

And while many adults consider pickiness a sign of being spoiled, research has

Picky eating habits typically emerge as a child enters the toddler years. These habits tend to diminish between age 4 and 5, although they can persist into puberty.

found that there are biological and developmental reasons behind young children's occasionally fussy dining habits.

Refusing food is a toddler's way of declaring her independence. "During the toddler years, children are going through separation and individuation, so they want to distinguish themselves in terms of their individual styles, and they express themselves through clothing and through food," says Donna Fish, affiliate therapist at the Center for the Study of Anorexia and Bulimia in New York and author of "Take the Fight of Food: How to Prevent and Solve Your Child's Eating Problems."

Parenting & Family

From preceding page

Children don't have the same emotional attachment to food as adults do. "Kids are very utilitarian with regard to food. They eat and they're off and running," says Fish, who runs a private practice in New York City. "It's the parents' job not to interfere with these biological signals, because that's what causes compulsive overeating and obesity."

Picky eating also is believed to