

Research Rundown

Article:

Considering Nature and Nurture in the Etiology and Prevention of Picky Eating: A Narrative Review

What did this review examine?

This review groups the developmental contributors to picky eating into the categories of **nature** and **nurture** and explores the interaction between the two. It also summarizes the potential outcomes of picky eating and the various strategies that are currently recommended to **mitigate picky eating** in young children.

How was picky eating studied?



A review of the literature was conducted in PubMed using 'picky eating', 'vegetable intake', 'taste genetics', and 'child food preferences' as keywords.

'picky eating' 'vegetable intake' 'child food preferences'
'taste genetics'

A large portion of the included research was conducted on pre-school aged children or younger; however, some of the referenced review articles included findings from a wider range of ages.

Key findings:

NATURE

Studies found that genetic factors such as:

- Preference for and ability to sweet taste
- Changes in taste perception with age
- Genetic predisposition to fear of certain foods

NURTURE

Studies found that environmental factors such as:

- Breastfeeding and early introduction to solid foods
- Parenting style and feeding practices
- Food availability and exposure

Early experiences including flavor exposure in utero and via breastmilk interact with genetic differences in flavor perception in a complex way to establish food preferences. As a child grows, it is found that their innate and established preferences and behaviors, as well as their temperament, can affect nurture components like parenting style and food availability. Therefore, it can be concluded that factors leading to the development of picky eating behaviors are **multidimensional and will vary from child to child**.

Put it into practice!

- Use herbs, spices and dips as a method for increasing palatability of vegetables, in order start shifting children's innate and pre-conditioned preferences.
- Pair exposure of unfamiliar foods with more liked foods and flavors to combat the fear of certain foods.
- Repeat exposure of un-liked items can increase consumption of a target food or vegetable. Combine this exposure with education materials to improve your chances for success!

Reference:

Patel MD, Donovan SM, Lee SY. Considering Nature and Nurture in the Etiology and Prevention of Picky Eating: A Narrative Review. *Nutrients*. 2020 Nov 6;12(11):3409. doi: 10.3390/nu12113409. PMID: 33171966; PMCID: PMC7694604.



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