

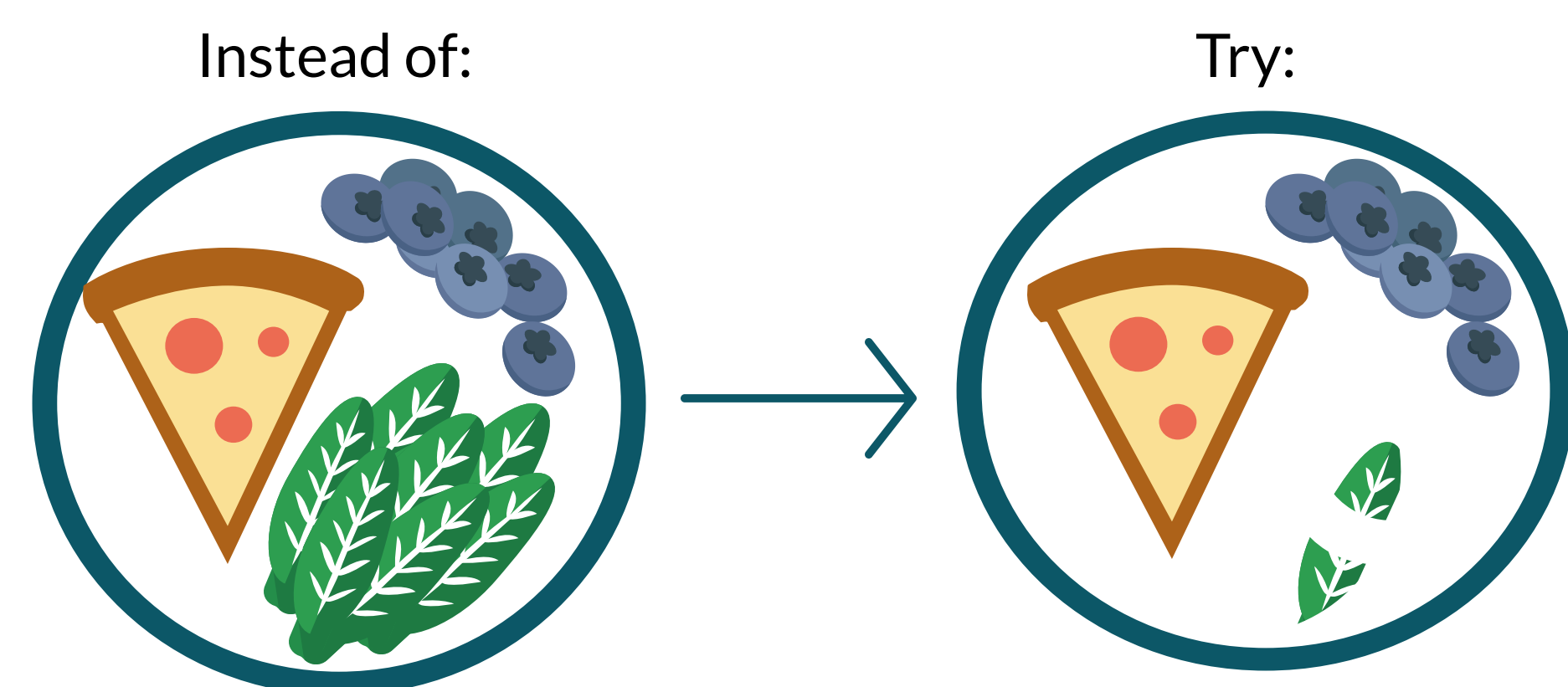
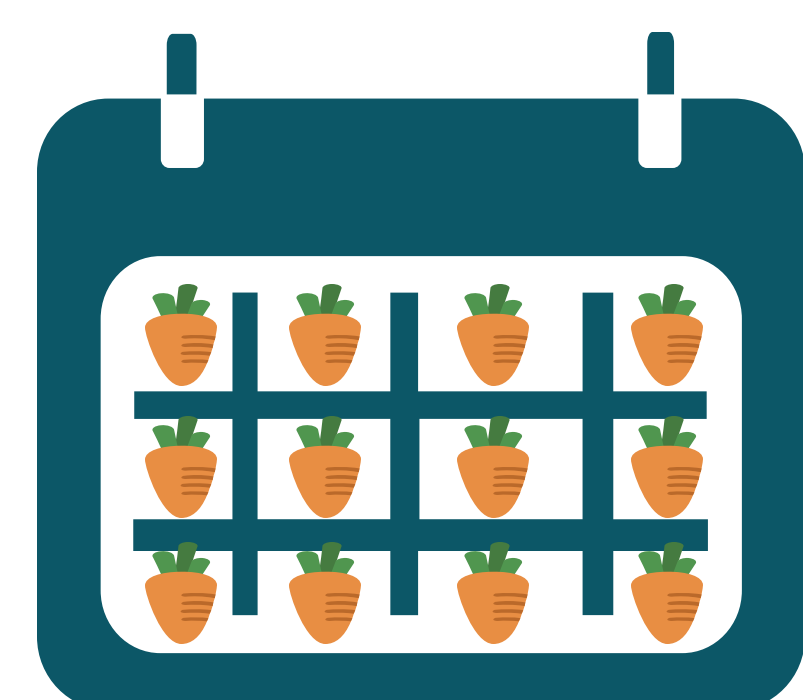
# Coping with Picky Eating

Picky eating is the tendency to have limited acceptance of new foods. Picky eating can take form as hesitancy or refusal to try new flavors, colors, or textures of food, or can present as adamant dislike for new tastes, flavors, or textures upon trying.

Picky eating habits can compromise the ability to maintain a balanced, well-rounded diet, especially in instances where there is limited acceptance of whole grains, fruits, and/or vegetables. The following tips can be helpful tools for expanding the diets of picky children to promote greater acceptance of diverse foods.

## Practice continued exposure

Changing eating patterns does not happen overnight, especially for children who are prone to being selective with their food choices. Try not to become discouraged if your child refuses to try or does not like the taste of a new food the first time it is presented. It can take several different exposures to the same food before taste can be developed for that item.



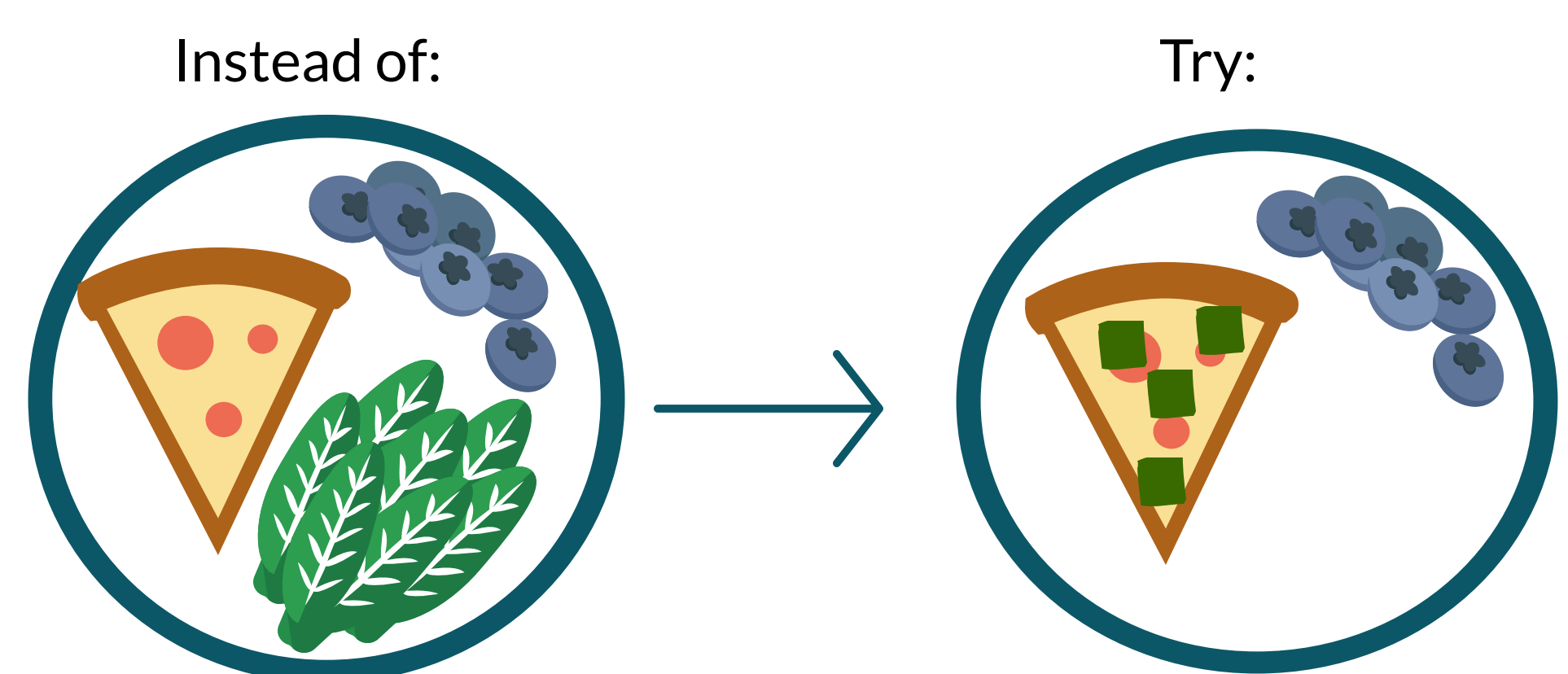
Familiar, well-accepted foods: Pizza and blueberries  
New food: Kale

## Work with less threatening portions

Providing a large or recommended portion size of a new food can be overwhelming, especially for picky eaters. Start out by introducing a small amount (1-2 bites) of a new food to a plate that contains other foods that your child is comfortable with.

## Add new foods to well-liked foods

Incorporate new foods into the same bite as familiar, well-accepted foods. You can start with less noticeable additions like roughly blending new vegetables into sauces or putting a few pieces of chopped kale on top of pizza. Slowly, portion sizes of the new food can be made more texturally and visibly noticeable as your child becomes more accepting of them.



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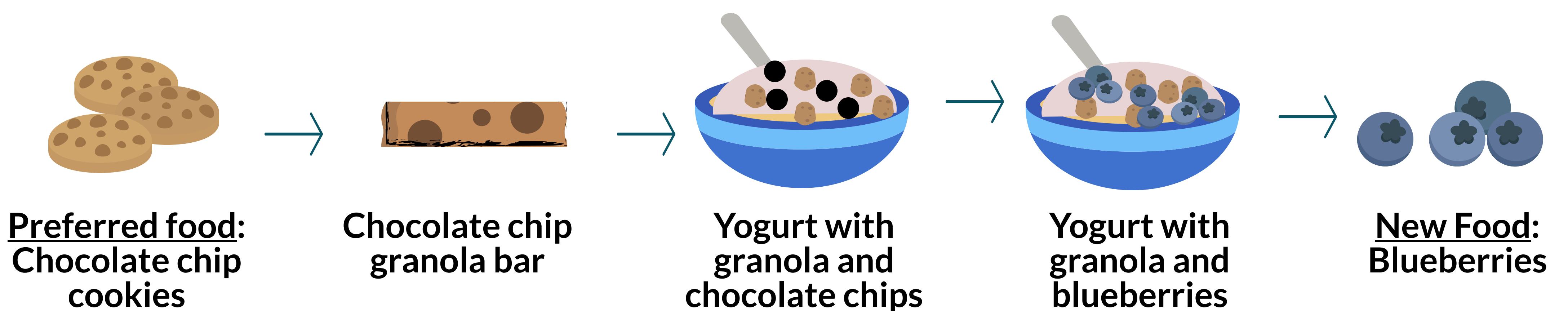
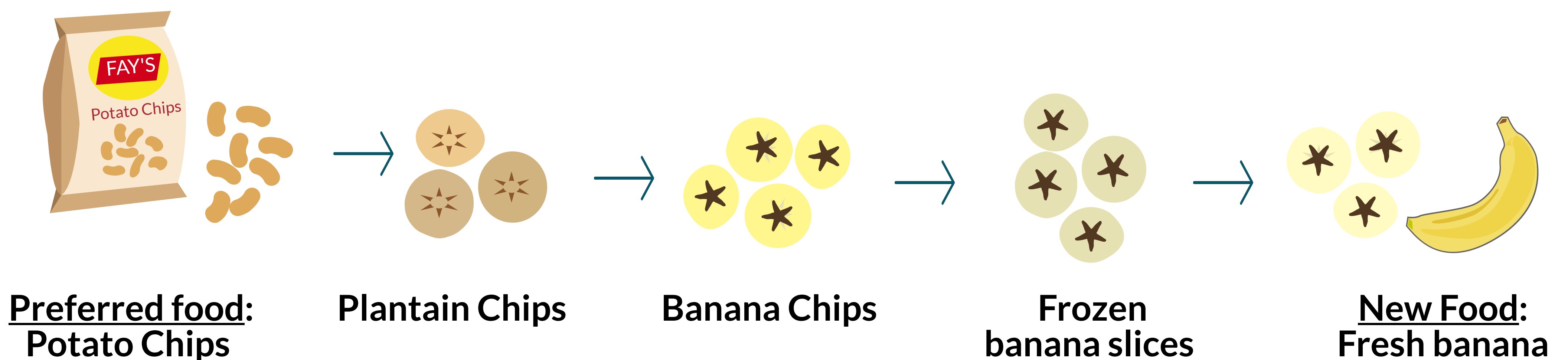
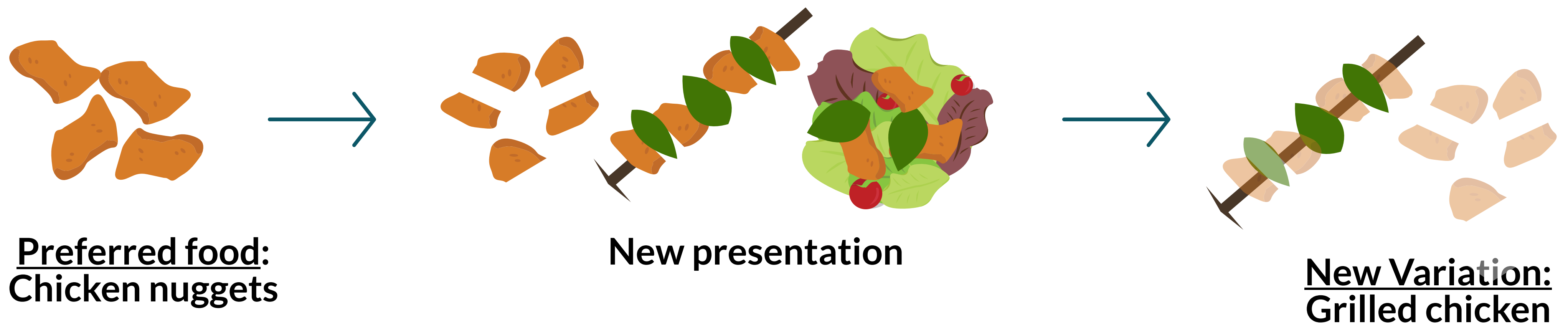
## Include your child in food planning, shopping, and preparation

Children are more likely to try new foods or diverse meals if they are involved in meal planning, shopping, and preparation. Assisting with making grocery lists, gathering foods in the grocery store, and participating in age-appropriate meal preparation tasks not only encourages greater acceptance of a variety of foods, but also helps children develop planning, organizational, and kitchen skills.

## Practice Food Chaining

Food chaining can be a helpful technique for expanding the diets of extremely picky eaters or children with food aversions. Food chaining involves making slight, progressive variations to accepted foods to slowly expand diet variety. Food chaining can involve making alterations to the brand, shape, or color of accepted foods, and can also include mirroring colors, shapes, and textures of accepted foods with new foods. Even the smallest changes in accepted foods can help your child become more comfortable with food diversity.

### Examples of food chains:





## **Practice 'this or that' Options**

It can be difficult to maintain a balanced and varied diet when food selection is left completely up to a picky eater. Instead of choosing all of your child's foods for them, try letting them choose from 2-3 snack, meal, or ingredient options that you present. This can help your child feel more in control and independent, while still promoting healthful food boundaries.

"Tonight we have broccoli and peas, which would you like to add to your pasta?"

"We have red peppers, yellow squash, or green beans, what color should we add our plate?"

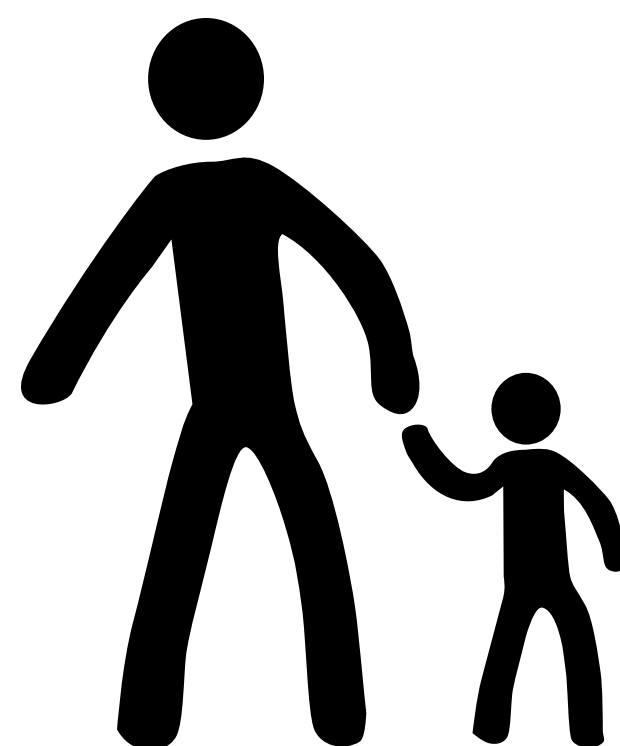
"For snack today we can have carrots with hummus or apple slices with peanut butter, which would you like?"

## **Limit Short-Order Cooking**

'Short-order cooking' refers to making special meals or snacks for your child when they do not want the meal or snack that is available. Short-order cooking may be tempting when your child is refusing to eat, however, they are less likely to try new foods or eat a varied diet if they know a back up of their favorite meal is always available.

### **The Division of Responsibility:**

**Guardian decides what type of food is available and when it is available**



**Child decides if they eat and how much they eat**

## **Avoid Using Food as a Reward**

Using foods that we want our kids to have less of as a reward for behaviors, achievements, or eating patterns can unintentionally place these foods on a pedestal, making them even more desirable.

**TRY adding a small portion of less nutritious foods (candy, sweets) to your child's meal instead of afterwards. In this case, all foods are all presented neutrally without fuss being made over the less healthy components.**

If your child only eats the sweet and asks for more, firmly state that there is no more of that item available for the meal. Try not to worry if your child only eats the sweet at first. With consistency, they will quickly learn that no more will be available and will move on to other components of the meal.