

How Food Preferences Develop

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Most kids refuse to eat their vegetables. Coming up with strategies to get kids to eat more of the green stuff is just one question Julie Mennella's lab is tackling. However, Mennella's research focus is not just on picky eaters. Her main research interests involve various components of food and taste preference, including how we've evolved to enjoy certain flavors over others. She investigates how we develop taste and flavor preferences. For example, she currently studies how a new mother's diet, via changes in amniotic fluid and breast milk, may affect a child's food preferences. In addition, Mennella is trying to determine if there are sensitive periods for flavor learning and food preference as well as the effect of alcohol and smoking on the types of food and flavors that we prefer.