Nutritional advice
for

fussy eaters

Department of Nutrition & Dietetics, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh (2010)
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Practical feeding strategies

Many children go through phases of refusing to eat certain foods or even at times refusing to eat anything at all. This is common in young children when they are trying to show their independence.

Although it may be worrying, it will not be harmful if your child doesn’t eat for a short period.

Golden Rules

As a PARENT you should decide on:

- WHAT, WHEN & WHERE foods are offered;

It is up to your CHILD to decide:

- Whether or not they are hungry or
- HOW much they want to eat

Extra Information

- If your child is still refusing to eat, speak to your GP about starting a calcium supplement or vitamin & minerals e.g. Healthy Start / Abidec

- Involve your child in shopping & food preparation to spark interest in food

- Invite friends round or change environment, e.g. have a picnic

Recipe Books


- Annabel Karmel. New Complete Baby & Toddler Meal Planner. Ebury Publishing

- Angela Nilsen. GoodFood: 101 Recipes for Kids. BBC Books

Environment

- Remove all distractions, e.g. TV, radio, toys, pets
- Eat together as a family
- Sit down at the table to eat
- Seat your child so they are well supported & within easy reach of their plate/cups/utensils
- Create a happy, relaxed atmosphere
If your child won't drink........MILK

Milk is a good source of calcium and protein. If your child won’t drink milk, there are plenty of other foods that contain these nutrients.

Try these foods instead:

- Cheese (e.g. soft cheeses such as cottage, cream or ricotta cheese and hard cheeses such as cheddar or gouda)
- Yoghurt or fromage frais
- Custard
- Rice pudding
- Milkshakes or fruit smoothies
- Calcium fortified soya milk, yoghurt or cheese

Or disguise it into foods:

- Adding milk, grated cheese, ricotta cheese or cream cheese to mashed vegetables, puddings/desserts, soups and/or egg dishes (e.g. scrambled eggs/ frittatas/omelettes)
- Serve vegetables with white / cheese sauce and/or grated cheese on top
- Serve pasta with cream sauces and/or grated cheese on top

Choice

- Offer the same foods as the family eats – don’t prepare separate "special" meals
- Continue to offer foods (on separate occasions) that have been previously refused. It may take a few exposures for a child to accept new foods
- Don’t assume a child will dislike a particular food
- Offer a new food alongside a familiar (liked) food
- If they refuse to food, do not offer alternatives.

Meal-times

- Offer very small amounts – too much food may overwhelm your child. Praise them when this is eaten and gradually increase the amounts offered.
- Encourage self-feeding, even if they are messy........table manners can develop later
- Expect, allow & prepare for mess – place splash mats & newspaper on the floor. Clean up calmly at the end.
- Wipe sticky hands & face after the meal

Timing

- Offer 3 meals. Some children may need snacks in-between
- Set meals are better than “grazing”
- Limit meal times to 20 – 30 minutes

Praise your child when they eat

Don’t become anxious or “fuss” or argue with your child

Learn to read cues—stop if they are turning their head away or clamping their mouth.

Don’t rush your child to finish eating

Don’t force them........CALMLY remove the food after 30 minutes
Increasing Variety
For children who are “fussy” eaters

Fruits & vegetables are important sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre

If your child won’t eat...........VEGETABLES

- Grate and add to meatballs/burgers, casseroles, stews, risotto, noodles, sauces, pancake mixtures, salads, omelette
- Puree and add to soups
- Serve as thick sauce or salsa to accompany dry, cooked meat pieces
- Use veg filling for ravioli pasta, rolls, dumplings or spring rolls
- Cooked/raw veg sticks with dip
- Baked sweet potato wedges with dip
- Melt cheese over cooked vegetables
- Modify shape, colour, texture
- Offer fruit instead (similar nutrients)

If your child won’t eat............FRUIT

- Puree & mix into yoghurt, custard or other dairy desserts, porridge / semolina (or other cereals)
- Offer soft fruits e.g. banana, papaya, mango, kiwi fruit, tinned fruits (peach, apricot, plums) in natural juice

If your child won’t eat...........MEAT

Meat is an important source of protein and iron

- Blend into soups
- Minced meat dishes e.g. bolognese, Mexican potatoes/nachos, lasagne, cannelloni
- Shaved, cold meats (e.g. chicken, roast beef, pork, ham)
- Try burgers, meatballs, meatloaf, ravioli pasta, pancake / crepe, buns or dumpling with meat filling
- Bean / Nut spreads & dips e.g. peanut butter, tahini, hummus, dahl
- Quorn™ or tofu e.g. patties, deep fried cubes, smooth pâté
- Baked beans on toast or potatoes
- Bean or lentil moussaka
- Egg omelette or frittata

- Add to pancake, cake or muffin mixtures
- Fruit smoothies or fruit ice lollies
- Frozen fruit yoghurt
- Try fruit with savoury foods e.g. pear/apple/ pineapple with meats
- Sandwich filling e.g. mashed banana + ricotta cheese
- Offer vegetables instead