Nutritional advice for fussy eaters

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.
Environment

- Remove all distractions, e.g. TV, radio, toys, pets
- Eat together as a family
- Sit down at the table to eat
- Create a happy, relaxed atmosphere

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 several 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 the food, do not offer alternatives.

Timing

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

Extra Information

- If your child is still refusing to eat, speak to your GP about vitamin & mineral supplements
- Involve your child in shopping & food preparation to spark interest in food
- Invite friends round or change environment, e.g. have a picnic

Praise your child when they eat
Don’t become anxious or “fuss” or argue with your child
Don’t rush your child to finish eating
Don’t force them...CALMLY remove the food after 30 minutes
Parents need to lead by example and enjoy a variety of foods
If your child won’t eat........MEAT

Meat is an important source of protein and iron

- Blend into soups
- Minced meat dishes e.g. bolognaise, nachos, lasagne, cannelloni, Shepherd's/Cottage pie
- Wafer thin sliced cold meats (e.g. chicken, roast beef, pork, ham)
- Try burgers, meatballs, meatloaf, filled pasta, pancake/crepe, rolls 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 chilli
- Egg omelette or frittata

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/semolina pudding
- Milkshakes or fruit smoothies
- Calcium fortified soya milk, yoghurt or cheese

Or disguise it in 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
**Fruits & vegetables are important sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre**

**If your child won't eat........VEGETABLES**

- Grate or dice carrots/courgettes/onions and add to meatballs/burgers, casseroles, stews, risotto, pasta, sauces, pizzas, blend sweet corn into pancake mixtures, add meat and vegetable to omelettes
- Puree vegetables and add to soups
- Serve as thick sauce or salsa to accompany dry, cooked meat pieces
- Choose vegetable fillings for ravioli pasta, dumplings or spring rolls, frozen vegetable fingers (fish finger-style)
- Raw vegetable sticks with a dip they like or cooked vegetable with small amounts of gravy
- Baked sweet potato wedges with dip
- Add cheese sauce to cooked vegetables
- Modify shape, colour, texture, and presentation on the plate
- Offer fruit instead (similar nutrients)

**If your child won't eat..........FRUIT**

- Pureed or chopped and mix into yoghurt, custard or other dairy desserts, porridge/Weetabix (or other cereals)
- Offer soft fruits e.g. banana, papaya, mango, kiwi fruit OR tinned fruits (peach, apricot, plums) in natural juice
- Add to pancake, cake or muffin mixtures
- Fruit smoothies, fruit ice lollies
- Add fruit to jelly
- Frozen fruit yoghurt
- Try fruit with savoury foods e.g. pear/apple/pineapple/grapes with meats or as a pizza topping
- Sandwich filling e.g. mashed banana & ricotta cheese
- Offer vegetables instead