

Eating Meals

Fussy Eaters

Many children go through a stage of refusing to try new foods. In fact it's a part of normal childhood development and can peak between 2-6 yrs. old. Some children who were previously thought to be "good eaters" can start rejecting any new food and even reject food they previously ate. As a result of this reaction to new foods, parents can begin to only offer foods that the child prefers and so the child's diet can become limited.

Children often like things to be the same and are not keen on new things. Later on, some children with additional challenges rely on the routine and predictability of mealtimes to be able to function more easily which makes them even more resistant to change.

Eating a limited diet, especially if important food groups like fruit and vegetables are missing, can lead to nutritional deficiencies or health problems.

If a child is struggling to try new foods, it can cause mealtimes to become a stressful event for the whole family.

Strategies

- Try to stick to regular mealtimes. This allows your child to become hungry before the meal so they are more ready to eat
- Try to eat at a table with your child in a good sitting position
- Encourage, but don't pressurise. Give them plenty of praise but try to avoid getting into a battle. This can have an adverse effect and make the problem worse
- Lead by example, eat at the same time as them, trying the new food and showing enjoyment
- Use cutlery and crockery that they find interesting at each meal, possibly with favourite cartoon characters
- Offer very small servings of the new food, alongside food they like on the plate. If this causes difficulty, then offer a very small amount of a new food on a different plate on the table
- Offer the new food regularly at intervals so that your child remembers what it is
- Try having two spoons, one of the new food and the other their favourite food. Offering the favourite food right after they have the new food in their mouth. They will be less likely to spit it out if they have a mouthful of their favourite food!
- Be relaxed and look for fun times to try foods where the emphasis is not on the mealtime, for example at a party, picnic or snack time
- Don't stop offering foods that have been refused. Just keep offering the food and wait for the fad to pass and for your child to start eating it again