

Managing Fussy Eaters



Fussy eating is common. It can vary from a child having a few likes and dislikes to a child who eats very few foods and won't try anything new.

Children start to be fussy with food around 12 months of age. They are fussiest from 18 months to 2 years when they become active, independent toddlers.

Fussy eating can cause parents to worry that their child is not eating enough or feel frustrated when food is refused. From 12 months, children don't grow as fast and their appetite may be smaller. Remember, healthy children will always eat when they are hungry.

- Be a good role model. Eat a variety of foods and eat with your child.
- Help your child get excited about food. Involve them in buying and preparing meals.
- Serve small amounts of food at both regular meals and snack times.
- Make meals and snacks appealing. Use a range of foods, colours, and shapes. Food should be easy to hold and chew.
- Be inventive. If your child refuses vegetables, prepare them in other ways such as mashed, grated or minced in casseroles and soups.
- Put a variety of food on the plate and let your child pick up and choose what to eat.
- Offer different foods from each food group e.g. if your child dislikes cheese try yoghurt.
- Serve a new food with a favourite food.
- Don't give up. Keep offering new food. It may take up to 10 times before they eat it.



- Encourage your child to feed themselves. Give them child-size cutlery.
- At the end of a meal, take your child's plate away calmly without any fuss. If they haven't eaten much try a healthy snack later on.
- Make sure your child isn't having too much milk. Children need 600mls of milk a day.
- Juice is not recommended, but if you give it to your child limit it to 100mls per day diluted with water (1 part water to 4 parts juice).
- Avoid using favourite foods to bribe your child to finish meals. This makes these foods more desirable, encourages your child to refuse certain foods and manipulates you into giving them what they want.
- Don't give your child less nutritious foods like chips, biscuits and lollies just so they'll eat something, as they'll expect the same next time.



Adapted from:
Better Health Channel. Toddlers and fussy eating factsheet. Victoria. Available from:
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au. [Accessed July 2008]

Queensland Health. Feeding fussy toddlers aged 1-2 years factsheet. Queensland.
Available from: www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets. [Accessed July 2008]
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