

How to tackle fussy eating

There are a number of ways you can tackle fussy eating:

- > Get your child involved from the start. For instance, you can involve them in the shopping for and preparation of meals and, when they are old enough, teach them about food and eating. You can also let them choose a recipe or help them to develop weekly meal plans.
- > Have the whole family eat together and eating the same meal.
- > Try a food 10 – 15 times over the course of a few weeks and your child should accept the food.
- > It is completely normal for your child to gag and make faces when they try new food, as well as spit it out. The important thing is that you don't give up. Remember to stay calm and don't become anxious. If they don't eat the food, just take it away and try again next time. They have lots of chances to eat!
- > Allow them to get messy with their food. When the time comes to clean your child, take them into a different room to do this. Also, don't use wipes to clean them whilst they are eating, as this can put them off their food.

- > Have a routine before taking your child to the table, such as going to the toilet, washing their hands and then choosing their plate. This routine will help them prepare them for meal times.
- > Make sure their high chair has a foot rest.
- > If your child doesn't want to eat, don't offer them a different food. They can have a 2-course meal, one being a healthy pudding, e.g. fruit or yoghurt. If they won't eat, then they will have to wait until the next snack or meal time.
- > As they are still growing, the amount a child eats across a given week will vary, so don't become anxious if one week they eat less than the week before.
- > For children who are currently only eating pureed food, try to begin offering them finger or bite-sized food, as this will help them get used to mixed textured food.
- > If your child drinks from a bottle, try to move them onto a cup, as this will decrease the amount of fluid they take in and increase their appetite.
- > Let them have drinks after meals so they are not filled up with fluids before they begin to eat.
- > Encourage your child to feed themselves. Don't force feed them.
- > Don't prolong meal times. If your child is not eating, then move onto second course or wait until next meal time.

- > Meal times and play times should not be combined. Keep technology away from the dinner table and talk to each other. Boundaries and routines are really good for children.
- > Be positive about food! Show them what your mouth is doing and talk them through the eating process. For instance, say phrases such as "has that gone down yet?" and "shall we have some more?" Also try to make nice food sounds, such as "yum," to encourage your child to eat.
- > Put food onto plates and use baby sized or child sized cutlery.
- > Offer a wide variety of foods which are different colours and textures.
- > Make sure they brush their teeth regularly as it takes away any stale and nasty tastes.
- > Let them have something to taste off an adult's plate.

