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Fussy Eaters

Supporting your little one with fussy eating

If you have a fussy eater at home, you're certainly not alone. Many families find themselves cooking different meals to suit different preferences, which can be tiring — and sometimes worrying — when you're trying to make sure everyone is eating well.

The good news is that with patience, consistency, and a positive approach, mealtimes can still be enjoyable and relaxed for the whole family

Tips to support fussy eaters

Every child is unique, so there's no single approach that works for everyone. These ideas can help you explore what fits your child's needs and your family routine.

Adjust meal frequency

Some children prefer smaller, more frequent meals rather than three big ones. Reducing snacks like crisps or low-nutrition foods can help ensure your child arrives at mealtimes hungry and ready to try new foods.

Model healthy eating

Let children see you enjoying a wide variety of foods. Your own enthusiasm for fruit, veg and balanced meals encourages them to try new things too.

Make mealtimes enjoyable

Sit together when you can and involve your child in simple tasks like setting the table. Keeping mealtimes calm and free from distractions such as TV, phones or loud music helps children focus on food and connection.

Cook together

Children are more likely to taste something they helped make. Simple dishes like wraps, pizzas or sandwiches allow them to choose toppings and explore food in a playful, hands-on way.

Talk about where food comes from

Seeing food in its natural form — whether through photos, books or growing your own herbs or vegetables — helps children feel more curious and confident about trying it.

Explore textures and tastes

If cooked vegetables are rejected, try raw sticks with a healthy dip.
Young children often prefer sweeter flavours and may take time to adjust to stronger tastes like broccoli or cabbage.

Tips to support fussy eaters

Add veg into stews and soups

Grated or chopped vegetables blend easily into sauces, stews and soups. Just avoid 'hiding' ingredients your child strongly dislikes — if they notice, it can create mistrust and make them more hesitant in future.

Keep portions small and appealing

Offer small amounts and make the plate inviting — try colourful bowls, fun shapes or separated compartments if your child dislikes foods touching.

Stay calm if food is refused

If your child chooses not to eat, carry on with your meal. Remove the plate afterwards without fuss and wait until the next planned meal or snack. This keeps mealtimes low-pressure and avoids unhelpful attention-seeking patterns.

Review milk intake

After around 18 months, some children drink so much milk that they feel too full to eat. Reducing milk slightly — while still ensuring calcium-rich foods are part of meals — can help restore appetite for solids.

Building Confidence Around Food

Children often need several tries — sometimes 15 to 20 — before accepting a new food. Staying patient, offering a variety of healthy options, and celebrating even small steps can build confidence over time. Try to avoid bribing or pressuring your child to eat, as this can lead to negative associations around food.

Most children will eat when they are hungry. By keeping mealtimes positive and offering nutritious choices, you're helping your child broaden their tastes at a pace that feels safe for them.

If you're ever concerned about your child's nutritional intake or growth, speak with your health visitor or GP for tailored support.

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