



Is your child a fussy eater?

HERE ARE
SOME IDEAS
TO HELP





Is your child a



Here are some general tips for encouraging children to eat well:

- Stay calm if your child refuses to eat something – simply remove the food or plate without comment.
- Don't worry if your child wants to eat the same food at every meal – often this is just a phase. Just keep encouraging them to try new foods.
- You might want to try offering new foods when your child is hungrier.
- Try serving a small taste of a new food with larger helpings of ones the child has already accepted and enjoys.
- Only offer one new food at a time – if children are faced with too many new foods at once, it can be a bit overwhelming, and they might reject them without trying them. Give them a few days to adapt to a new taste before moving on to something else.
- Sometimes children eat better when the portions are smaller. They might also be more willing to try small tastes of new foods from somebody else's plate – it's less overwhelming than the sight of a food they don't like, or don't recognise, on their own plate. When it comes to introducing new foods, a 'taste' can be as small as half a teaspoon!



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- Remember that children are more likely to be willing to try a new food if they have the option of not swallowing it. It might help to show them how to spit food into a tissue if they don't want to swallow it.
- Don't use food as a reward or a punishment. Saying things like 'no pudding until you've eaten all these vegetables' could turn your child off vegetables altogether, and will reinforce the idea that the pudding is more appealing than the vegetables.
- Try to sit down and eat with your child as often as possible – even if you only have a small snack and plan to eat your own meal later. Children like company while they are eating, but things like TV during meals can distract some children from eating.
- Toddlers often eat better if they're allowed to feed themselves with their fingers, rather than being spoon-fed.
- Children often enjoy eating with other children and you can encourage this, especially if the others eat a range of healthy foods.
- Sometimes a child will eat for another favourite adult with less fuss – so you might want to try inviting someone else round for a meal.
- Snacks are important, but too many of them can spoil the appetite at mealtimes.
- Try offering your children healthy alternative snacks to sweets and crisps, such as: yoghurt or fromage frais, breadsticks and cream cheese, cherry tomatoes, carrot, celery or cucumber sticks, a scone, currant bun or piece of fruit loaf.

- Too much juice, or milk, between meals can also fill a child up so they are less hungry – try offering water instead.
- Try to make food look attractive by offering brightly coloured foods with mild flavours and interesting textures.
- Keep offering rejected foods every couple of weeks or so.
- Try to keep your cool! If children learn that refusing a food gets a reaction from you, they will use this to their advantage.



Here are some practical tips for encouraging children to eat more vegetables:

- Vegetables are often enjoyed more in a cheese sauce (e.g. cauliflower or broccoli).
- Try blending carrots, parsnips or peas into soups.
- Chop vegetables up finely and use in stews, casseroles and stir-fries.
- Mash soft vegetables such as turnip or carrot into potatoes.
- Offer crudité's – clean, crisp vegetables cut into strips to be eaten with fingers – and try serving with a yoghurt or tomato dip.
- Offer tomato or carrot juice.
- Serve pasta in fun shapes, with a vegetable sauce or a tomato sauce with vegetables blended into it so that they cannot be seen.
- Lots of children enjoy tomatoes and carrots – offer these as snacks and finger foods.



Lots of children go through a phase of being fussy eaters, and it can be worrying and frustrating. Food fads are often short-lived though, and the child may grow out of it fairly quickly. Foods that are rejected one week may well be accepted the next, so keep offering a range of food. Your child might suddenly be willing to give it a go! Try to relax as much as possible at mealtimes – make sure meals are sociable, friendly occasions.





For more specific advice on feeding your children you can email the healthyliving nutrition expert by visiting **www.healthyliving.gov.uk**. If you have any concerns that your child is not growing properly or eating adequately, then please speak to your health visitor or general practitioner.

