

Fussy Eating Top Tips for 5 – 12 years

It is very common for children to develop fussy eating behaviours, these top tips can help you to get through this often very difficult phase!

Do not provide restaurant service!

- ✓ Cooking alternative meals can encourage their fussy eating
- ✓ Be persistent – remember that some children require more than 20 exposures to a food before they will try them
- ✓ Be aware that there are some foods your child may never enjoy, but don't let this put you off cooking them.
 - Put a variety of new and familiar foods on the plate and allow your child to choose for themselves what they are willing to eat



Try not to get too emotionally involved

- ✓ Try not to express worry, as this could cause your child to become anxious at mealtimes too
- ✓ You are not on your own! Fussy eating is very common, consider social media and support groups to discuss tips with other parents

Develop a routine for meals and snacks



- ✓ A typical meal pattern is 3 meals and 2 snacks per day.
- ✓ Children thrive on a routine!
- ✓ Try to serve meals in the same location where your child feels relaxed, secure, and comfortable.
- ✓ Check out 'Caroline Walker Trust' for advice on portion sizes

Keep meals to 20-30 minutes

- ✓ After this time it is unlikely your child will eat any more
- ✓ Remove meal without comment, and await next snack or meal

Talk about food!

- ✓ Your child is at an age where they can discuss why they don't like particular foods – listen to their opinions
- ✓ Consider using TV to prompt discussions about food – such as 'Junior Bake Off'

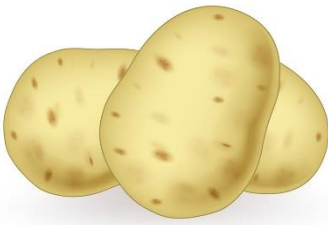
- ✓ Don't worry if your child does not want to discuss food, try not to become frustrated

Involve children in food preparation

- ✓ Research has suggested children are more likely to try foods when they have been involved in the preparation – as they feel more confident about it
 - Encourage tasting and smelling different parts of the meal
 - Stirring sauces, adding herbs / spices
 - Setting the table and helping to serve food (as long as it is safe to do so)
- ✓ Take your child shopping and discuss food with them, encourage them to suggest and choose foods



Build on foods your child already likes



- ✓ Don't try to 'hide' new foods in familiar foods, offer them alongside and encourage your child to touch, taste and look at the food.
- ✓ If your child likes chips – try potato wedges, hash browns, potato cakes and mash.
- ✓ If your child likes bread – try pitta bread, muffins and crumpets.
- ✓ Your child may need over 20 exposures to new foods before they are ready to try it – be persistent and don't give up.

Eat together as a family

- ✓ Keep mealtimes calm and relaxed
- ✓ Lead by example – eat a variety of foods and discuss them at the table 'yum!'
- ✓ Minimise distractions at the table
- ✓ Invite friends over – grandparents, friends and siblings can help encourage the child to eat

Stay positive!



It can be very stressful when your child won't eat well, try to ignore negative behaviours at the table (refusing to eat / pushing plate away / throwing food) and praise positive behaviours (eating / touching / licking / tasting new foods).

Lucy Blackstone
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