



Taking the stress out of feeding fussy eaters

Tips for parents managing fussy eaters

1

Eat together

Mealtimes are an important opportunity for role modelling. If your child sees you eating healthy food, they will eventually eat it, too. Focus on the social interaction - ask your child about their day rather than talk about food.

2

You provide, they decide

As a parent, you decide what foods are offered, but your child decides if and how much they eat. Give them a daily mixture of foods they know and love AND small amounts of "test foods" - foods which they are still learning to accept.

3

Repeat, repeat, repeat

It's easy to feel disheartened when your child refuses the same food a few times, but persistence is key. Children need 10-15 exposures to a food before they accept it into their repertoire. Keep offering a wide variety of foods in small amounts and it will pay off in the long run.

5

Let them eat to appetite

Children listen to their tummies better than adults. They have small tummies, so need 5-6 opportunities to eat healthy food each day – but if they don't eat at every opportunity, that's OK. It is normal for their appetite to vary day to day.

4. Avoid distractions

Turn off the TV and put away toys and other distractions, so your child can focus on having a happy mealtime. Mindful eaters will become more competent eaters in the future.

6

Cut the power struggle

Pressuring children to eat makes them feel anxious and less likely to try new foods. Stay calm at mealtimes and use the time for valuable conversation between family members.

7. Plug Nutrient Gaps

Some fussy eaters may need extra nutrition support in the short term until they broaden their variety of foods. Oral nutritional supplements, together with specific vitamin and mineral supplements may be of benefit. Talk to your dietitian about whether nutrient gaps are an issue for your child.