

## Fussy Eating Top Tips for 0-5 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!

### Encourage self-feeding and offer small portions

- ✓ Small tummies only need small portions!
- ✓ Discourage drinks prior to meals as these can fill children up and reduce their appetite.
  - Try not to offer a drink for 30 minutes before a meal
- ✓ Offer 1 savoury and 1 sweet course at each mealtime
  - Offer lots of different foods to encourage your child to have a varied diet when they grow up
- ✓ Regularly offer a variety of finger foods – some children prefer having control of feeding themselves
- ✓ Check out the 'Infant and Toddler Form' online for information around correct portion sizing.



### Recognise when your child has had enough



- ✓ Verbal cues: no / crying / screaming
- ✓ Physical cues: keeping mouth shut / spitting / turning head / pushing plate away / heaving
- ✓ Avoid phrases such as 'if you finish your meal you can have pudding'

### Develop a routine for meals and snacks

- ✓ A typical meal pattern is 3 meals and 2 snacks per day.
- ✓ Try to fit meals around their sleeping pattern – as babies and toddlers do not eat well if over tired.
- ✓ Try to serve meals in the same location where your child feels relaxed, secure, and comfortable.



### Keep meals to 20-30 minutes

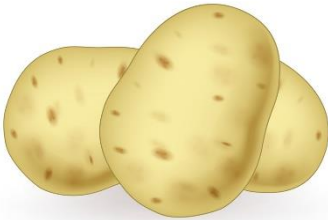
- ✓ After this time it is unlikely your child will eat any more
- ✓ Remove meal without comment, and await next snack or meal

## 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) can keep younger children involved.
- ✓ 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
- ✓ You may find when your child starts school or nursery they begin to eat more as they are eating with a group



### Stay positive!

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

Lucy Blackstone  
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