



Is Your Child a Poor Eater?

Many young children can be fussy eaters and this seems to be a normal part of growing up. Misbehaving at mealtimes can be a way of getting attention and can often be very upsetting.

The following advice will help make family mealtimes more relaxed and enjoyable. Mealtimes will become part of your normal routine, rather than a battle of wills.

Helpful Hints

- It is important to establish and keep to a routine.
- Try to keep to the same times for your meals each day.
- Always offer 2 courses at a meal, one savoury and one sweet.
- Young children often need 3 meals and 2-3 nutritious snacks each day.
- Children learn by copying, so whenever possible try to let your child eat with other people, especially children.
- If it's just you and your child, sit together.



Try to make mealtimes relaxed and sociable

- Never force your child to eat or drink.
- Praise and encourage your child when he/she eats.
- Smiling and saying "well done" will show him/her that you are pleased.
- Make sure forks and spoons are not too big for your child, use plates and cutlery designed for children.
- Offer small manageable portions of food, it helps to avoid over-facing your child.
- If your child loses interest or refuses to eat after 20-30 minutes remove the meal without making a fuss or comment.
- Make sure your child does not fill up on sweets, crisps and drinks - save them until after meals.
- Avoid arguing with your child over food.
- Make sure your child is not distracted during mealtimes - switch the TV off!
- Try to get the whole family together, sit round a table if possible.
- It is a good idea for children to use their fingers to play with food; this will help them to learn to feed themselves. Do not worry if they make a mess.



A child will respond to your clear rules and boundaries so try to stick to them. Most children will try to test these and this can be a difficult time. Try not to give in and remember that the rest of the family need to say the same as you. Things will get better in time if you are all consistent.

Remember that improving your child's eating takes time - be patient!

Some of your questions answered



My child will only drink from a bottle. What should I do?

By the age of 1 year, children should be using a cup for all drinks. To move from a bottle to a cup limit the times a bottle is offered. Offer drinks from a cup during the day and only offer a bottle as part of the usual bedtime routine. It often helps to change the whole bedtime routine when stopping the bottle at night.

Encourage your child to choose their own cup. Some children use a bottle for comfort, try to use other comforters instead, e.g. toy / blanket.

Praise and give lots of attention when your child drinks from a cup.

My child won't try new foods

List foods and drinks your child will eat - if your child is old enough include them in this. Choose one food your child likes and serve it with a new food. Encourage your child to taste the new food but do not insist they eat it. However, if the new food is eaten, give lots of praise.

Do not offer an alternative if your child refused the new food, just try it again another day.

My child won't eat lumpy food but can manage chips and biscuits. What should I do?

To help your child accept lumpy food it is important to keep lumps well cooked and well chopped at first. Try adding home made family food, e.g. mashed potato to a savoury baby food. Gradually cut down on the amount of baby food given and increase the amount of home made food. Continue to offer more finger foods as these are easier to manage, as your child can feed themselves.

Encourage your child to try other finger foods such as:-

- Fingers of toast/rusk
- Fish fingers, skinless sausages
- Pieces of fruit
- Bite sized sandwich
- Cooked vegetable pieces
- Cheese slices

My child won't eat for me but does eat for childminder / other family members.

This is quite common and you should feel reassured that your child is eating. It may be that they are full, so check how much your child has eaten.

Remember your child will eventually improve, but it does take time.



Contacts

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Food for Life Bradford Dietitians

Bradford Nutrition & Dietetic Service is located within Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

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Just Eat More
(fruit & veg)