

MANAGING FUSSY AND FADDY EATING

Eating with your children:

Do eat with your child as often as possible, try to sit round a table. Make meal times about more than just the food by chatting at the dinner table.

Do act as a role model for your child. Your child will copy your behaviour.

Do make positive comments about the food. Talk about the colour, the shape and smell of the food but not the taste.

Do praise when your child when they eat well

Do keep on talking and smiling whilst your child is eating. They will eat less if you give them more attention when they stop eating.

Don't leave long gaps between meals to make your child more hungry

Don't ask if they want, or like the food

Don't rush a meal, your child may eat slowly

Don't force or bribe your child to eat

Don't pressure your child to eat more when they have indicated they've had enough. Respect your child's appetite.

Don't feel guilty if a meal turns into a disaster.



Food:

Do always offer something you know the child will eat at each meal. In addition offer the foods you and others are eating e.g. put a plate of vegetables in the middle of the table so that everyone can help themselves

Do take any commercial food out of container / packet and put on a plate or in a bowl

Do give small portions as large portions can be very off putting. If finished give praise and offer more

Do persist -It may take 15 – 20 attempts for foods to be accepted and eaten. Changing how you serve a food may make it more appealing. For example, your child might refuse cooked carrots but enjoy raw grated carrot.

Do offer finger foods, this can give control to your child

Do try to stop any night time bottles of milk, gradually reduce the volume.

Don't hide new foods inside foods that your child already likes, never trick your child.

Don't mix medicines in food. Give medicines in the bathroom or bedroom e.g. away from food and use different spoons or syringes.

Don't assume that food refused will never be eaten: Tastes change with time. One day they'll hate something, but a month later they may love it.

Don't use nice foods as a reward: this reinforces the idea that sweets are nice and vegetables are nasty. Instead, reward them with a trip to the park or promise to play a game with them.



Away from the table:

Do involve your child in food shopping and preparing for the meal e.g. putting things on the table.

Do involve your child in simple cooking and food preparation: freezing fruit in ice-cubes, chopping salad, chopping vegetables, stirring cake mix, decorating pizza.

Do allow and encourage your child to play with food away from the table. (See messy play ideas above).

Don't expect your child to eat or taste the food that they have helped to prepare.

Don't talk about your child's eating problem in front of them



Mealtime Routine:

Do develop a daily routine of 3 meals and 2-3 snacks

Do offer two courses at meals; one savoury followed by a sweet course

Do still offer desert if they don't eat their main course, but don't offer any extra quantity of desert. Re-offer the main course if they are still hungry later

Do eat in a calm, relaxed environment without distractions e.g. no TV, games and toys

Do allow your child to feed themselves, they may make a mess

Do finish the meal in 20-30 minutes

Do learn to recognise when your child has had enough and remove any uneaten food without comment: Your child will say "No", keep their mouth shut, push food away, hold food in mouth, spit food out, cry, shout and scream, gag or retch

Do arrange for your child to eat with other children, especially those who are good eaters.

Do ask an adult that your child likes and looks up to, to eat with you. Sometimes a child will eat for someone else, such as a grandparent, without any fuss.

Don't offer a completely new meal if one is refused. This can easily happen and turn into a game with the food still not eaten.

Don't offer a sweet course/ desert as a reward, or withdraw it as a punishment. This will make the sweet food more desirable.

Don't give large drinks of milk, squash or fruit juice within an hour of a meal as this may reduce their appetite, give water instead.

Don't give snacks just before a meal.

Don't give a snack very soon after a meal if the food has not been eaten:
Your child may quickly learn that they do not need to eat a meal as they will be given a lovely snack.

Don't wipe your child's face / hands between each mouthful, do let them get messy.

Don't talk too much about other children being better eaters than your child.

