

# Fussy eating

It is natural to worry and assume that something must be wrong when your child seems to lose interest in food. In fact it's something that many toddlers go through. Up to a third of children at the age of two could be described as fussy eaters. Most will grow out of it, and accept a wider range of food in time.

## Why some children lose their appetite

- At around one year old the child's rate of growth slows down, which could cause a reduction in appetite.
- At this age they become more independent and become less co-operative.
- They are also learning lots of new skills, and may feel that they don't want to stop what they are doing to eat.

## Healthy Eating

It is important to carry on offering your child a wide range of healthy foods, establishing good eating patterns for life.

## Top Tips

- **Stick to a routine of three meals a day** - breakfast, lunch and tea, with healthy snacks mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Try to make sure they sit in the same place to eat so they feel comfortable and secure.
- **Offer food when they are hungry.** Some children seem to be starving when they first wake up, others can need longer to work up an appetite.
- **Give them simple, healthy food.** Don't ask them what they want - at this age they won't know. Give small portions and give praise when it's finished, then offer them some more.
- **Give tried and tested foods alongside something new,** so that the meal looks familiar. A toddler may need to try food about 10 times before they will accept it.





- **Eat together.** This makes meal times more enjoyable and sociable. Ask for a spoonful of your child's food, then offer them a spoonful of yours. Show your enjoyment of food with lots of smiles and saying yummy - this will help to boost their confidence. Invite their friends round for meals - toddlers will often accept new foods if they are eating with other children who enjoy that particular food.

- **Encourage them to feed themselves.** It might be messy, but they will often eat more when they feel that they have more control. Finger foods are often popular with toddlers.
- **If your child will only eat a few foods, build on these.** For example - if they like potato, try different types of potato like mash or roast potatoes. If they reject something that they previously enjoyed, don't worry. Try it again in a while.
- **Don't get angry, even if a meal has not been eaten.** If you are anxious and tense, your child may see this making things worse. Just take the plate away without comment.

## When to see the Doctor

Try not to worry even if your child's diet does seem very limited. Research shows that most toddlers almost always manage to eat the right balance of nutrients needed for healthy growth and development. However, if your child is losing weight, seems lethargic, is weak or irritable or has a fever, then discuss this with your health professional.

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net)

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