

Fussy Eating

Many children go through phases of not eating and it is considered a normal part of childhood. However, children with additional needs such as autism spectrum conditions (ASC) can be especially prone to extreme fussy eating. I am happy to provide further advice and support if you have concerns about your child's eating, either via an assessment at school (when this is possible) or via a telephone consultation. But for now, here are some simple steps to try and improve your child's eating:



NO PRESSURE TO EAT

Pressurising your child to eat seems natural but we know it leads to an unhealthy relationship with food. Don't get into a power struggle, coax, bribe or reward

SET A SCHEDULE

Space meals out 2.5-3 hours apart and give nothing but water in between. Treat snack time like a meal. Times may change every day but the interval is important.

EAT AT THE TABLE

Eat at a table consistently (even for snacks) because it creates routine, structure and a sense of importance.

EAT TOGETHER AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE

Actions speak louder than words and demonstrating that you think meals are important goes a long way.

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Avoid labelling food as bad or smelly. Let them observe you eating a variety of foods (without you pressurising them to do the same).

NO SHORT ORDERS

Don't ask your child what they would like to eat, it's your job to choose the food and their job to eat (or not). However, they can help you plan out meals in advance.

ONE PREFERRED FOOD AT EVERY MEAL

While choosing your child's food always make sure they have at least one food they eat 50% of the time or more.

GIVE A VARIETY OF CHILD'S PREFERRED FOODS

Rotate through your child's preferred foods as much as possible, trying not to give the same foods 2 days in a row.

NO DISTRACTIONS

Avoid using tablets, tv, toys, etc. to get your child to eat because your child isn't learning to actively eat.

These nine steps are just the basic principles and more challenging eating behaviours will require more support. Strategies to develop the variety of your child's food choices and ways of introducing new foods can be provided. Please get in touch for further support. However, in the meantime, further resources are listed below:

Video:

These clips are from an interview with Dr. Elizabeth Shea, a clinical psychologist and expert in eating difficulties with people with ASC, from the National Autistic Society.

- Why do people with ASC have eating challenges?

<https://vimeo.com/192148687>

- What are the most effective treatments for eating difficulties for people with ASC?

<https://vimeo.com/192149514>



Instagram

If you have access to Instagram, these are excellent resources with a wealth of information on all things eating related!

- mymunchbug_melaniepotock
- tinytotsnutrition
- food_explorers_kids
- happy_little_eaters
- playingatyourplate

Websites:

These suggested websites are dedicated to addressing eating challenges with children.

- This website is from a qualified Occupational Therapist and Mum to three fussy boys. It has a wealth of information on not only fussy eating but sensory processing difficulties too.

<https://yourkidstable.com>

- The below website promises real strategies to tackle fussy eaters and create happy mealtimes. If you go to the **Parents** tab you will see the **Common Feeding Pitfalls** link. This section has some really useful advice.

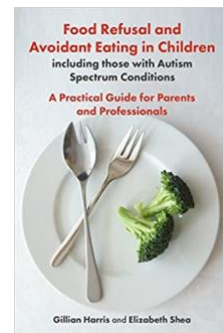
<https://www.childfeedingguide.co.uk/>

Facebook:

- Your Kids Table – this is the Facebook page for the website detailed above.

Reading:

Food Refusal and Avoidant Eating including those with Autism Spectrum Conditions by Gillian Harris and Elizabeth Shea



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