



Family Learning - Early Years



Tips for Fussy Eaters

It's natural to worry about your child's eating habits. If you have a fussy eater, you're not alone. Keep offering a variety of foods. It's not ideal to let your child get away with only eating certain foods to keep the peace. Be patient. Keep trying new ideas and eventually you will see positive results.

Stick to a routine with three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and tea. Don't give your child too many snacks between meals. Two healthy snacks a day is plenty: mid morning and mid afternoon. Cut back on junk food like chocolate. Try not to leave meals until your child is too hungry or tired to eat.

Eat together. This makes meal times enjoyable and sociable. Chat and model trying different foods. You could say positive comments, such as 'yummy' and smile. Invite friends who are good eaters to tea. Sit at a table and minimise distractions. For example, turn off the TV, so your child can focus.

Praise your child for trying new foods. Try not to use food as rewards. Your child might start to think of sweets as nice and vegetables as nasty. Instead, reward them with a trip to the park or promise to play a game with them.



Be creative with presentation. For example, you could make a pizza in the shape of a face or use a cutter to make star shaped sandwiches.

Encourage your child to feed himself/herself. Your child might eat more if they have more control. At first encourage the use of fingers, then move on to cutlery. Work towards your child cutting their own food with a knife and fork.

If your child rejects food, don't force them to eat it. Give your child time to try it. Then calmly take the food away and try again another time. If you become anxious and tense it may make the situation worse. Children's tastes change. One day they'll hate something, but a week later they may love it.

Cook with your child. When children are involved in the planning and preparation of meals, they are often motivated to eat them. Your child might enjoy food shopping with you. Young children are capable of tasks such as cracking eggs and mixing.