

Fussy Eaters and Mealtime Problems

Tips for Parents/Carers



Model

- Have regular family meals and snacks across the day.
- Eat the same food as your child to “show them how it’s done”.
- Have your child facing you and encourage them to look at you when you are eating.
- Talk about what you are eating and use describing words like ‘crunchy’, ‘soft’, ‘cold’.
- Encourage your child to get involved in meal preparation.



Structure

- Use the same place and cues e.g. cutlery.
- Try a tasting plate with preferred and non-preferred foods.
- Keep mealtimes to a set period (15-30 mins) at regular times each day.
- Serve new food in small portions.
- Tasting and spitting out is ok.
- If your child refuses to eat new foods, do not offer alternative foods.



Reinforce

- Provide verbal praise in appropriate amounts.
- Offer preferred food in between non-preferred food.
- Celebrate small successes. Touching or looking at food is great!
- Stay clam. Do not get upset if they refuse to eat. Offer again later.
- Play with food. Exploring new food in fun, gradual steps allows children to feel safe.

PLEASE NOTE:

All children can experience stages of food refusal but if it persists, it can develop into an issue. Seek support from an Occupational Therapist or Speech Pathologist if your child eats less than 20 foods OR if you are concerned.