

# FUSSY EATING HINTS & TIPS

Worry and anxiety about trying foods is common, especially when it comes to fruit and vegetables.

Tip - Offer small amounts of foods you would like them to eat and build up slowly.

Tip - Children and toddlers need reassurance and encouragement from a trusted adult to make them feel safe when eating.

Little people are genetically wired up to be worried about trying new foods. In cave man times this would keep us safe from eating poisonous berries or rotten meat.

It is frustrating when your child refuses food you have prepared. This can cause tension and result in more refusal, challenging behaviour and further anxiety for all.

Tip - No matter how frustrated you may feel, don't show it! Pretend that you are relaxed. This will allow them to feel more relaxed and confident.

Tip - Help them to understand their feelings.

Little people often do not know that worry is making them refuse to try new foods.

"I can see it is difficult trying that. It's okay to feel worried about something new"

"I think you might be worried about trying this because you have pushed your plate away".

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Trying new foods can make some children feel out of control, this can cause anxiety and can result in food refusal.

Tip - Help them feel in control by giving a guided choice. "would you like to try peas or carrots with dinner today?" This way your child feels in control.

Tip - try to comfort and reward using stories, games, cuddles, verbal praise and reassurance.

Giving food as comfort or reward can result in eating in response to emotions. We should teach children to be able to cope with their feeling, without turning to food.

Calling food 'good' or 'bad' can create an association with being good for eating salad or being bad by eating chocolate, which can cause feelings of guilt.

Tip - Using positive language about all foods will mean your child never feels certain foods are 'naughty'. Try using 'sometimes foods' and 'all the time foods'.

Tip - Keep going! Remember, refusal is normal. It will be frustrating; focus on progress. When you start to see your child's relationship with food improve, it will be worth it.

These strategies may work quickly for some children and for others it may take time. Some days it will work well, whereas other days it may all go wrong depending on your child's appetite/hunger levels, mood or whether they slept well.