



Feeding the under 3s
the food they need

How to manage your toddler's fussy eating: things to avoid

Guidance & Tips for Parents

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FUSSY EATING:
THINGS TO AVOID



FUSSY EATING:
THINGS THAT HELP



If your toddler is a fussy eater you may be aware of how easily mealtimes can turn into a nightmare of refused food, tantrums and frustration. Fortunately most toddlers grow out of the problem and eventually learn to eat a variety of foods.

Learning to eat is like any other learning process - it takes time. As parents there are a number of things you can do to help to ensure that you and your toddler will, once again, be able to enjoy food together.

Don't	Reason
Rush a meal.	Some toddlers eat slowly and rushing a toddler to eat can reduce their appetite.
Insist your toddler finishes everything on his/her plate or pressure a toddler to eat more when he/she has indicated to you they have had enough.	Toddlers should be allowed to eat to their appetite and parents and carers should respect this.
Pressure a toddler to eat more when he/she has indicated to you they have had enough.	
Take away a refused meal and offer a completely different one in its place.	A toddler will soon take advantage if you do this. In the long run it is better to offer family meals and accept that your child will prefer some foods to others. Always try to offer one food at each meal that you know they will eat.
Offer the sweet course as a reward.	You will make the sweet course seem more desirable.
Offer large drinks of milk, squash or fruit juice within an hour of the meal.	Large drinks will reduce your toddler's appetite. Give water instead.
Offer snacks just before a meal.	The snacks will stop them feeling hungry.
Give a snack very soon after a meal if they haven't eaten well at the meal.	Many parents may do this just to ensure their toddler has eaten something. However it is best to have a set meal pattern and wait until the next snack or meal before offering food again.
Assume that because they have refused a food they will never eat it again.	Tastes change with time. Some toddlers need to be offered a new food more than ten times before they feel confident to try it.
Feel guilty if one meal turns into a disaster.	Put it behind you and approach the next meal positively. Parents also learn by making mistakes.

See **How to manage your toddler's fussy eating: things that help** for more guidance.

There are medical reasons why your toddler might not eat. The most common ones are if your toddler is constipated or anaemic.

If fussy eating persists and you are still worried about your child's feeding habits, consult your health visitor or GP who will advise you on what help is available.