

Dietary Advice for Families

Faddy Eating

Dietitian: _____

Contact: _____

Many children go through phases of refusing meals or being more 'picky' with food. Although this is a normal part of growing up, it can be worrying for parents.

Adults often over-estimate how much children need to eat and children may need less to eat than you think. Some days children may eat more than on others but will still get enough nutrition for growth and keep them healthy overall.

Learning to eat a more varied diet can take time but here are some tips to start with:

- ◆ Eat together as a family as often as possible as children learn from adults and other children.
- ◆ Avoid distractions at mealtimes and try making it an enjoyable social occasion. For example, sit around a table and turn off the television, mobile phones and tablets.
- ◆ Offer regular meals and snacks. Most young children need three meals and 2-3 nutritious snacks each day.
- ◆ Do not allow your child to graze constantly on food or drink. Allow at least 90 minutes between meals and snacks.
- ◆ Offer two courses at each meal (a savoury and a sweet course).
- ◆ Try not to rush the meals as children may be slow to eat, but avoid letting meals last longer than 20 – 30 minutes.
- ◆ Do not worry if your child doesn't eat anything at a mealtime – this won't harm them and they are likely to eat better at the next opportunity.
- ◆ If your child refuses a meal, do not take the food away and offer a completely different meal. Wait until the next meal or snack time.
- ◆ Offer your child new foods regularly even if they refuse them at first. It can take children more than 12 tastes of a new food before they accept it.
- ◆ Make food fun by varying the texture and colour of meals. Try getting the child involved in simple meal preparation.

- ◆ Encourage younger children with finger foods and encourage self-feeding. Mess is okay!
- ◆ Offer gentle encouragement. Never force-feed as this makes the problem worse and can make mealtimes more stressful.
- ◆ Make sure your child is not drinking large amounts of fluids (especially milk or juice) or eating too many yoghurts, as this will reduce their appetite for meals. 6-8 glasses of water or sugar free diluting juice daily is enough.

Try to:

- ◆ Limit milk to about 300mls a day
- ◆ Limit fruit juice or smoothies to one cup a day
- ◆ Restrict yoghurts to 1 or 2 each day

All children under the age of 5 years should take age appropriate Vitamin D drops every day. Ask for them at your local chemist.

Meal and Snack ideas

Breakfast

- ◆ Breakfast cereal and milk
- ◆ Toast with butter or margarine and jam with a cup of milk
- ◆ Hard boiled or scrambled egg on toast

Lunch

- ◆ Baked beans on toast
- ◆ Sandwich with ham, cheese and tomato, peanut butter or corned beef cut into bite sized pieces
- ◆ Cheese on toast
- ◆ Lentil soup and bread
- ◆ Follow with yoghurt or fromage frais and fruit

Evening meal

- ♦ Pasta e.g. macaroni cheese or spaghetti bolognese
- ♦ Chapatti or rice and curry
- ♦ Shepherds pie, fish fingers or fish cakes with vegetables and scoop of mashed potato
- ♦ Follow with rice pudding or custard and fruit

Nutritious Snacks – do not allow your child to fill up on these

- ♦ Cubes of cheese
- ♦ Sandwich triangle with cheese, ham or tuna
- ♦ Pancake with jam
- ♦ Biscuit and cup of milk
- ♦ Breadsticks or sliced pitta breads with peanut butter, hummus or soft cheese
- ♦ Chopped fruit e.g. banana or apple