



Tips for fussy eaters

Don't expect overnight miracles...take credit for every little success (like when your toddler accepts a new food for the first time)...it's all good. But do expect setbacks, your toddler may well have bad days when he will push away your lovingly prepared meal and it can be nothing short of heartbreaking. Don't despair and don't think it means he will never accept it in the future.

A few tips on how to increase the likelihood of getting your toddler to eat something new or something that has been refused in the past.

- Don't let your toddler fill up on drinks in between meals particularly cordials, squashes and fruit juice as this can suppress their appetite, leaving no room for solid food. Aim for about six drinks per day in a beaker or cup. Water is best between meals.
- Refusing a food may not always mean that he doesn't like it, you may have to offer the food over ten times before he decides that he likes it! Food refusal is a normal part of a toddler's development.
- Don't force your toddler to eat; this can result in a permanent dislike of that food. When it becomes clear that he's not going to eat it, take the plate away without commenting. Next time offer them a different food from the same food group.
- Make sure there are no distractions at mealtimes, e.g. turn off the television! Toddlers can only concentrate on one thing at a time, having a TV on in the background can be very distracting and make mealtimes more difficult.
- Praise your toddler when he eats well, this will help him to enjoy meal times. Don't make a fuss when he refuses food, as frustrating as it is try to stay calm. Some toddlers may refuse food as a way to get your attention.
- Take a look at your own diet. If you are eating well and enjoying a variety of healthy foods, your toddler is more likely to want to try these foods too. Don't expect him to eat well if you don't. Toddlers learn by copying their parents, siblings and other children.
- If your toddler enjoys going over to his friends or cousins house for tea, you could ask your friend/relative to include a food on the menu that he refuses to eat. If he sees others eating and enjoying it, he will be more likely to want to try it. But don't attempt to try this if the other children are likely to reject it too.
- Toddlers love messy meal times when they are allowed to feed themselves. Don't spoon-feed just to avoid a mess. Let him pick the food up rather than trying to spoon it into his mouth. Toddlers like having control of the feeding themselves. Try to make meal times fun! Involve your toddler in simple preparation and cooking of food. Use a cookie cutter to cut pizza or bread into fun shapes, making them more interesting. He will become familiar with new foods and more likely to try new things.