Helpful Tips for understanding your Fussy Eater

Stage 4
12 months onwards

It's common for toddlers to go through a stage of fussy eating. Growth rate slows in the second year of life, so their appetite may decrease and they may not eat as much food as before.

Naturally, parents can worry their little one is missing out on important nutrients. Remember, healthy children have good appetite regulation and usually eat when they're hungry. It's normal for them to eat well on some days, and eat very little on other days!

For more toddler feeding advice, call **PlunketLine on 0800 933 922.**

For questions about Wattie's foods, call **Wattie's for Baby on 0800 55 66 66.**



Planning goes a long way

- **Plan mealtimes for when your toddler isn't too tired.** You may need to have dinner time a little earlier than usual.
- Keep portions small and include a variety of colourful foods.
- **Offer milk or water after or in-between meals** so your toddler doesn't fill up on liquids before a meal.
- **Too much milk can spoil your toddler's appetite for food.** Limit your toddler's milk to 2 small cups (around 350mL) a day.
- If your child isn't hungry at dinner time, **consider limiting or skipping the afternoon snack.**



Food refusal can be a normal part of growing up

- **New foods may be rejected at first, but continue to offer regularly.** You may need to offer a new food 10 or more times before it is accepted!
- **Don't allow your toddler to decide which foods are on offer!** Keep offering a wide variety of foods (with no added sugar or salt), even if they are rejected at first.
- **If a meal is refused, let your child sit quietly for a few minutes** before leaving the high chair or table. Don't offer treats or desserts to replace uneaten food, or children learn that by refusing a meal they'll get a treat instead.

Setting up a healthy relationship with food

- **Allow your toddler to decide how much food is enough**, as children have good appetite regulation. Be responsive to your toddler's fullness cues! Insisting they clean their plate, can teach them it's OK to overeat.
- **Don't use food as rewards or bribes** – this leads to foods being labeled 'good' or 'bad'.
- **Be a good role model by eating a wide variety of foods** - don't expect your toddler to eat foods other family members refuse.

whānau āwhina plunket

Making Mealtimes a Positive Experience

- Let your child explore food by touching, and expect some mess!
- Let your child feed themselves, while supervising and giving help when needed.
- Eat together with whānau - your child watches and learns from you.
- Children enjoy company at mealtimes – often they will eat more, or try new foods around other children.
- Set clear boundaries - but avoid turning mealtimes into a battleground!
- Don't let mealtimes drag on for too long e.g. 30 minutes is enough. Think about offering leftovers from meals as snacks.

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Essential Guide
to feeding
Your Toddler

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Stage 4
12 months onwards

It's a good idea to get your little one started with healthy eating habits right from the word go, even though it can be a challenge at times. Although they're probably eating most family foods, remember toddlers are not just 'little adults'.

For their small body size, toddlers have greater nutrient needs than adults and because they have little tummies they need regular meals with small nutritious snacks in-between.

Thirst Quenchers

Toddlers need plenty to drink, especially on hot days or when they're active. If they don't drink enough they can become dehydrated which can lead to constipation.

- **Breast Milk** – Continue breastfeeding as able for up to 2 years or longer.
- **Water** – Keep a jug handy in the fridge and a water bottle close.
- **Milk** – From 12 months onwards, toddlers can drink whole-fat cow's milk as their main milk drink. Two small cups (350mL) a day is enough for most toddlers. Milk is an important source of calcium, fat soluble vitamins and protein, but not a good source of iron.
- **Offer milk or water after or in-between meals** so toddlers won't get too full to eat their food.

My child won't drink milk! Don't stress – you can't make your child drink milk. Instead, offer 1 or 2 servings of other dairy foods each day e.g. yoghurt, cheese.

Avoid offering fruit juice, cordial, fruit drinks, soft drinks or flavoured milks as these can be high in sugars. Sugary drinks can increase the risks for tooth decay and excess weight gain.

Don't offer tea, coffee or alcohol – these drinks are not suitable for toddlers and children and can be harmful to their health.

Bottle or cup? You can introduce an open cup (without a spout) from 6 months. It takes time and support to learn to drink from a cup.

Aim to have your toddler drinking from an open cup by around 12 months. Toddlers often drink less from a cup, and so they are less likely to fill up on too much milk.

Meals and Snacks

It's important to offer a wide variety of foods, because no single food or meal will provide all the nutrients a toddler needs to grow, develop and stay healthy.



- **Toddlers need 3 meals a day with small snacks in-between.**
- **Offer a wide variety of foods from the four food groups each day:**
  - vegetables and fruit
  - grain foods
  - milk based foods
  - legumes (such as lentils, tofu & beans), smooth nut butters, eggs, fish, chicken & lean red meat
- **Toddlers get all the fibre they need from fruits, vegetables, breads and cereals. They don't need very high-fibre foods like bran cereals and heavy grain breads.**
- **Toddlers need a little more fat in their diet than adults to meet their high energy needs. Low fat diets aren't suitable for their growing bodies.**
- **Prepare and choose toddler meals and snacks with no added sugar or salt.**
- **To avoid the risk of choking, always provide foods that are an appropriate soft texture and shape. Toddlers can eat an increased variety of textures, but some foods will still need to be cut into a suitable size and/or be cooked until soft. Avoid small hard, round, sticky, or stringy foods.**
- **Ensure your child is sitting down. Actively supervise them while they are eating and drinking.**
- **Toddlers don't need vitamin and mineral supplements unless prescribed by a doctor.**

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