

Selective Eaters

What - Selective Eating

Eating meals with your child can feel stressful especially when they refuse to eat or eat a small amount of food from their plate. You may question if they are getting enough daily nutrients to support their health and development, and how you can better understand your child's behaviour in order to create successful eating strategies.

Why- Let's Reflect

As a child begins to feed themselves they gain independence and autonomy, leading them to decide what to eat and how much. These choices can also be supported by how sensitive a child is to smells, textures, tastes and the feeling of being full. A child can also be influenced from how others in their life relates to food. For example, if a parent or sibling does not like certain foods or if they limit their food intake. When we punish children during meal times for not eating, a child may become a selective eater as it becomes a power struggle. In turn, there are many reasons why a child could be a selective eater.

How - Let's Problem Solve

- Observe and reflect by asking yourself "what is my child trying to tell me and why?" Put yourself into your child's shoes. Track all food likes and dislikes with detail. Patterns may appear that can be learned from.
- Keep meal and snack times consistent. Space out meal and snack times to ensure your child is hungry and ready to eat.
- Include children in the food preparation of healthy meals.
- Cut drier foods like meat into smaller pieces and offer a dipping sauce to make it moister and easier to chew and swallow.
- Offer new foods consistently along with food your child likes. It can take 10-15 times before your child will try something new. Be patient.
- Understand your role as the adult is to offer snacks and meals and your child's role is to decide what to eat and how much.
- When we bribe children or punish with food we create unhealthy relationships that can lead to power struggles and less eating.
- Minimize distractions and eat together.

For More Information Please Visit Unlock Food:

<https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Childrens-Nutrition/Picky-Eating.aspx>