

FOOD REFUSAL



Infants learn to like foods that they are given in the first year of life. They learn to accept different tastes and they learn to cope with different textures. As they move into their second year however, all toddlers start to show a fear of trying new foods or may wish to declare their independence a little more. This fear is a completely normal part of their development.

They may start to refuse foods that they used to accept. This can be worrying for a parent however, at this stage calorie intake is more important than a varied diet. Some children need to see a food 6-7 times before trying it and taste it 10-15 times before liking it.



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Things that help...

Ensure that others at the table are setting a good example – if mummy & daddy eat vegetables the child is more likely to copy

Involve your child in preparing the meal i.e. setting the table or washing the veg

Give your child a small portion as it is great for your child to feel they have finished a meal - they can always have seconds

Try to keep mealtimes consistent and have a 20-minute time limit each course

Praise your child for sitting nicely at the table – try not to focus only on their eating habits

Use brightly coloured plates and cups and provide easy to hold finger foods

Things to avoid...

Don't force your child to eat as this will only make your child more anxious at mealtimes

Don't hide new foods inside liked food as this may cause your child to stop eating the liked foods.

Don't negotiate with your toddler where food is concerned – it is important that as the parent you stay calm & in control

Don't leave too long a gap between meals in the hopes your child will be hungrier

Don't refuse to give your child high-energy foods they like in hopes that they will eat healthier as it is important that your child consumes sufficient calories

Inconsistent (time) or stressful mealtimes

Why toddlers refuse food...

Your toddler may refuse food that is new to them, but they may come to like it – keep offering it.

Fear of new foods in the 2nd year may be a survival mechanism

Toddlers may limit the variety of foods they eat; this phase will usually pass without problems – it may be more evident in some toddlers than others

Toddlers refuse extra food when they have eaten enough. If your toddler is growing and developing normally, they are getting the right nutrients for their needs

The amount of food a toddler eats will vary from day-to-day. An anxious toddler will tend to reduce food intake

Tiredness/ illness/ anxiety and being sad can all effect a toddler's appetite.