

Fuss Free Mealtimes



Enjoy mealtimes

- Praise your child for trying
- Talk calmly and use positive language



Create a mealtime routine

- For children over 12 months of age, it is recommended that you offer food every 2-3 hours, for example – three meals a day and small snacks in between
- Children should be hungry at mealtimes – it is important not to fill up on drinks or snack foods



Allow your child to respond to their own hunger cues

- Resist force-feeding
- Allow your child to decide how much of the meal to eat. Avoid offering alternatives for uneaten meals



Be a positive role model

- Eat as a family
- Serve the same food as the rest of the family (you may need to adapt meals slightly, such as less spice or salt)
- Model eating and enjoying a variety of healthy foods
- Talk positively about healthy foods (for example, 'yummy crunchy carrots')



Use non-food based rewards

- Non-food based rewards include praise, extra play time, stickers and reward charts
- Do not reward with food (for example, avoid saying 'eat your vegetables and you will get dessert')

Fuss Free Mealtimes continued...



Avoid distraction

- Turn off the television and put away the iPad, phone and toys during mealtimes. Use the opportunity to talk as a family instead



Keep trying

- It can take 10-15 times for a child to accept a new food – don't give up!
- When providing new foods, serve alongside a food they like – you may need to separate foods so they are not touching
- Introduce one new food at a time
- Try cooking or preparing using different methods (for example, raw vs. steamed vs. baked vegetables)



Offer child-size portions

- Do not overwhelm with a big plate of food
- Provide small portions and give children the opportunity to have more



Present food creatively

- Make food fun and interesting – make shapes or characters, be colourful, use special cups and plates, cookie cutters and drinking straws



Involve children

- Involve children in cooking, food play, gardening, menu planning, grocery shopping
- Encourage exploration – smell, touch and taste foods
- Let children feed themselves – mess is okay

Fussy eating is a challenge for many parents – you are not alone!
Be patient and keep trying