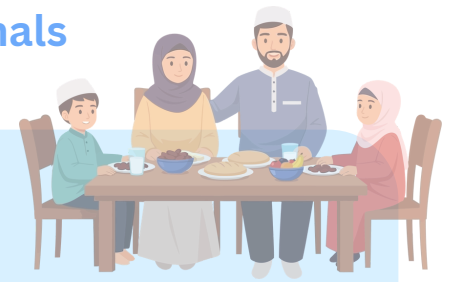


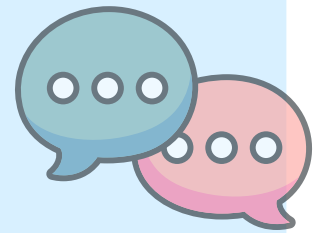
Support for School Aged Children with Selective Eating

Practical tips for families, carers & professionals



Communication Tips

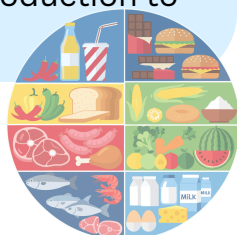
- **Talking About Your Day:** Start off the meal talking about something else such as your day or a book or movie that you have watched together. Avoid talking about food for the entirety of the meal.
- **Mindful Conversations:** Avoid discussing the child's eating in front of them, as they will understand and it might affect their behaviour & feelings towards food.
- **Positive Language:** Use encouraging phrases like “yet” and “not ready” to build confidence. For example, “It’s okay if you’re not ready to touch it” or “You aren’t ready to put it near your face, that’s okay.”
- **Indirect Questions:** Ask indirect questions to engage children’s curiosity, such as “Our eyes can tell us what colour it is” or “Our eyes can tell us what shape it is.” Or “Our hands can tell us how the food feels”.



Food Exploration

Diverse Food Groups: Each meal should include a variety of food groups—protein, carbohydrates, fruit, and vegetable.

Gradual Introduction: Start with freeze-dried or dehydrated fruits and vegetables as a gentle introduction to these food groups.



Creating a Positive Environment

Instruction Over Questions: Provide instructions rather than questions to avoid pressure. For example, say “You can set the plates” and “You can wash the grapes” instead of asking if they want to.

Encouragement Over Challenges: Instead of asking, “Are you brave enough to taste it?” use phrases to build interest in food like “I wonder what it tastes like” or “If you’re ready, you can take a bite.”

Learning

Food Science Education: Introduce children to basic concepts of digestion and food groups in an age-appropriate manner.

Why Do We Eat?

You can explain to your children that we eat because...

“To have energy to play”

“To grow strong and tall”

“To keep our bodies healthy”

“To concentrate and learn”



What Foods do we need to eat?

Proteins – you can say “Proteins like chicken, nuts, and fish build muscles and bones, they help us grow and give lots of energy for playing for a long time”.

Carbohydrates – you can say “Carbohydrates like bread and rice give some energy for playing.”

Fruits and vegetables – you can say “Fruits and vegetables help stop us from getting ill and keep us healthy”.

Relaxation

Breathing Techniques: Before meals, try deep breathing exercises with your child to help them feel relaxed for the meal.



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