

## Further support or information

Useful Websites include:

[www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk](http://www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)

[www.pocketparent.co.uk](http://www.pocketparent.co.uk)

[www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)

This leaflet has been put together by the White Horse Federation's Family Support Team.

We can provide support and assistance with a number of issues including:

- \* Support with your child's behaviour
- \* Links to other professionals who may be able to support your family
- \* Links between home and school
- \* A listening ear and support at the times when family life gets tough
- \* Support with financial or housing issues

If you would like to arrange to meet with a Family Support Advisor, please ask your school for more details.



## Tips for Dealing With Fussy Eaters!



## Why are some children fussy eaters?

For children under 5, being selective about what they eat and refusing some foods is actually considered a normal stage of development. Most grow out of this phase but for those who don't it can be frustrating and worrying for parents.

Children have more taste buds than adults so flavours often seem more intense and that is why they may have a stronger reaction to them.

Sensory experiences such as texture, taste, smell etc. are also very powerful for some children and can have a big impact on what they like or dislike.

Also remember that you don't like everything! Our tastes change over time and they may simply, genuinely dislike the taste.

Children want (and need) a certain amount of control over their lives and mealtimes are often when they try to get it.

It can also be a behavioural issue; children quickly learn that playing up at mealtimes is a great way to push your buttons and get some attention!



There are lots of tips in this leaflet but the best tip is to keep calm and don't feed the behavior with lots of attention!

## What can we do?



### **Break the cycle.**

If mealtimes have become a battleground, you and your child will probably be tense before you even sit down. Re-assess the situation to try to break the anxiety. Offer meals you know your child likes for a couple of days, eat somewhere fun like a picnic, take the pressure off for a short time before moving on with the tips below.

### **Don't get involved in a power struggle!**

Give them limited choices about the things that you can and be firm on the things you cannot. 'Do you want carrots or peas?', 'How many pieces of broccoli would you like?'

### **Get children involved.**

Allowing them to help you plan the week's meals, choose foods at the supermarket and prepare and cook dinner can really bring them on board with what you are serving. Try some meals that they can compose themselves e.g. putting food in wraps or adding toppings to jacket potatoes.

### **Don't overwhelm them with big portions.**

Seeing too much food on their plates can really put them off even trying. Serve up smaller portions in the knowledge they can come back for more, or even better, let them serve up how much they would like.

### **Be sneaky!**

Hide vegetables in baking or in pasta sauces, make the food more appealing to them by making shapes or funny faces or give foods funny names.

### **Encourage them to try new things.**

Have a rule that they have to taste everything on their plate, even if it is a tiny lick. Give them lots of praise for doing so and move on, don't force them to eat it all. Tastes change over time so continue to offer foods even if they didn't like them first time.

### **Above all, be consistent.**

Don't cook an alternative meal, don't fill them up on snacks (as tempting as it is when you are worried they aren't eating enough) and always keep calm!

## Try not to panic....

Children will not usually go hungry.

Try to look at what you child has eaten over the course of a week rather than over the course of a day. If it helps, write it down. This will give you a clearer picture of exactly what they do eat and you might be surprised at how much it really is. As long as they have food from all of the food groups over the course of 2-3 days then don't worry too much.

Our appetite as adults is quite regular and we expect our children to be the same but they are still going through those phases of growth spurts and so will have days or periods where they are very hungry and days when they just aren't!



**If you are concerned about your child's diet or are worried that they may be hyper-sensitive to sensory experiences then you should consult a medical practitioner.**