

Encouraging children and young people to try new foods



Eating a varied diet is important for health, however this can seem challenging when children are unwilling to try certain foods. There are many reasons why children behave the way they do with food, so framing these behaviours as ‘cautious’ rather than ‘fussy’ better reflects the complexity of the situation. Children have heightened senses, and remember negative food experiences, which makes them unwilling to try the food again.

How can we help cautious eaters?

Create a positive dining environment	Play background music or a story. For some, a calmer environment may help them to try new foods
Be a role model	Try different fruit and veg in front of your child
Promote appetite	Limit snacks between mealtimes
Try exploring the senses of the food	When you introduce a new food, ask “what does it look like?”, “how does it smell?”, “how does it feel?”
Avoid ultra-processed foods	Processed food is popular with children, as it looks and tastes the same every time, but it is often high in fat, salt and sugar, and low in nutrients
Don’t give up!	It can take a child between 10-15 positive experiences with a food before they like it

Positive messaging is key!

Focus on why a food is fun, or good for their body and mind. Although it can be challenging, try not to put pressure on children or tell them off, and allow them to take their time with new foods.

