

When they refuse food

A calm, practical guide for taking pressure out of mealtimes and helping new tastes feel familiar.

One refusal does not mean they dislike it forever.

Young children may need to meet a new food many times. Keep the experience calm and continue offering variety without pressure.

- 1 Offer a tiny amount**
 A small taste feels manageable. Let the child decide how much to eat.
- 2 Try again another day**
 Repeated, gentle exposure helps unfamiliar flavours and textures become familiar.
- 3 Serve one familiar food**
 Pair something new with a food the child already accepts.
- 4 Eat together**
 Children learn by watching trusted adults enjoy a range of foods.
- 5 Avoid pressure or rewards**
 Do not force, bargain or use sweets as a prize. Keep mealtimes neutral and warm.
- 6 Trust fullness cues**
 Turning away or closing the mouth can mean finished. End calmly and try later.

When to ask for individual help

Speak with a qualified health professional if you are worried about growth, swallowing, persistent coughing or choking, pain, dehydration, very limited foods, repeated vomiting, or a sudden change in eating.