



Fussy Eaters

What is fussy eating?

The term 'fussy eater' is often used but it is not always a helpful description as it tends to ignore the real challenges some children face when it comes to mealtimes and eating snack.

What challenges do children face?

If we are thinking about sensory information, we need to consider what the child is processing when eating.

Visual- What the food looks like. Consider the shape, colour, and presentation of the food.

Tactile – Children will receive sensory input from the feel of food on their hands, face and inside their mouths. Our mouths will tell us about the shape and texture of the food and whether it is hot or cold.

Smell- Children will smell the food when it is on their plate or near their mouths.

Taste – The taste of one food in the mouth or a combination of tastes together.

Hearing – How the food sounds in our mouth especially as we crunch and chew the food.

Proprioception (body awareness)- Children need to learn how much force to use when chewing and biting different foods and awareness of their mouths being full or empty.

Vestibular (balance)- Children need to keep themselves and their heads upright and in the correct position for eating.

None of our sensory systems work alone they all work together, and a child can have sensory difficulties in one or more areas. They can be hyper (over) sensitive or hypo (under) sensitive in each sense.

Some children dislike change and this can affect their eating pattern such as food presented in a different way or on a different plate. Also, some children may notice different food packaging and refuse to eat the food they would have previously eaten.



Try this at home:

Keep a food diary of what your child eats over a week rather than a day.

Keep mealtimes positive and be a good role model by eating with them and talking to them.

Involve your child in preparing the food, read stories about food and use real food in play situations such as playing shops.

Introduce new foods slowly, just having the new food on the plate without the pressure of eating it is fine.

Links to EYFS: CL, PSED, PD, KU, EAD

Links to SEND Code of Practice: C&I, C&L, SEMH