

## Fussy eating is common in young children. Richard Sager Darwin Dietitians

They are easily distracted & often use food as a way of showing their independence or to get attention. Children have small appetites and small stomachs (about the size of their fist). They need small, regular meals and snacks at regular times aim to offer 3 small meals and 2-3 snacks each day. Children after 12 months of age slow down with their growth so their appetite often drops.

### Encouraging new foods:

- Toddlers tend to be wary of new foods & tastes, & take time to learn.
- A child may need to try new food **8-20** times before they will accept it.
- Offer a new food with one that your child likes add small amounts to familiar foods
- Stay calm & positive
- Praise new food acceptance
- Set a good example – let your child see you enjoying healthy foods
- Involve children in shopping, cooking, gardening
- Try different shapes, use fun cups/bowls
- Try different ways of cooking the new food

### Tips to include more fruits & vegetables:

- Try raw vegetables with healthy dips or make them into dips
- Prepare them in different ways
- Add to other foods that they enjoy (mash, grate, puree)
  - e.g. pizza, rissoles, spaghetti bolognese, soup, mashed potato, stew
- Allow child to experiment with them
- Let child help prepare the vegetables or even grow them
- Continue to offer them small serves of salad, vegetables and fruit during the day (be patient)
- Let them see you enjoy your vegetables
- Blend fruit with milk, yoghurt & ice for a fruit smoothie
- Put fruit or vegetables in muffins, cakes etc.

### Making mealtimes happy:

- Avoid replacing with a favourite food or they'll expect the same each time, Food rewards is not ideal
- Try to avoid bribing or punishing or where possible rewarding them with food if so, try to use healthy food rewards
- Sit together as a family to eat
- Make meal times family time, fun & enjoyable

However, sometimes children may be overly fussy due to a medical problem. If you are worried about the diet or health of your child, contact a Dietitian

Remember:

- ▶ Meals are a shared responsibility between parents and children
- ▶ As parents we decide: WHAT food is offered & WHEN
- ▶ Our children decide: how MUCH to eat