



Feeding the under 3s
the food they need

Managing extreme food refusal: How to broaden your child's food experience

Guidance & Tips for Parents

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Some children haven't had enough experience with solid textured foods in their first year. They may only eat pureed food or 'easy' bite and dissolve foods like Skips or Quavers. Because they have not learnt to move food around in their mouth, they get anxious about food that needs to be chewed. Some toddlers are wary of putting anything with a different texture into their mouth.

There are a number of things that you can do to broaden your child's experience of food textures.



Do	Reason
Continue to give the pureed or soft food that your toddler likes.	This will ensure that your child takes the calories needed for growth.
Gradually introduce more 'experiences' of slightly more solid foods. Toddlers only need small amounts of these foods so that they can learn how the food feels in their mouth, and how to move the food around in their mouth.	This will enable your child to learn the chewing skills needed for more solid textured foods.
Start by introducing bite and dissolve foods.	These are foods that quickly dissolve in your mouth if you hold them there; like Quavers, Skips, Wotsits, meringue, and wafer biscuits. This will give your child confidence about having lumps in the mouth; these foods quickly become soft and they are less likely to cause a choke and gag reaction.
As your toddler begins to accept some bite and dissolve foods, replace one of the spoon-fed pureed meals with bite and dissolve foods.	You need to balance your child's calorie needs with their need to learn new chewing skills.
Gradually increase the firmness of the foods offered as your toddler becomes more used to them. Remember though that your toddler will still need some soft textured foods, such as yogurts or fromage frais.	This is to make sure that your child continues to take enough calories to grow.

Don't	Reason
Give very difficult solid foods at this stage. Avoid foods like meat, bread and uncooked apple.	Your child may not be able to cope with these textures. They may feel that they are choking when they try to swallow these foods, and be fearful of trying more difficult textures in the future.
Worry about dietary balance at this stage.	It is more important at this stage to make sure that your child has enough calories to grow well. Dietary balance can come later.

If the problem persists see your GP or health visitor who may refer you to:

- a specialist speech and language therapist for help with the transition to firmer textured food
- the community paediatrician who may be able to identify the cause of your child's inability to cope with firmer textured food