



Feeding the under 3s
the food they need

How to cope when your child shows extreme food refusal: things to avoid

Guidance & Tips for Parents

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X EXTREME FOOD
REFUSAL: THINGS
TO AVOID

✓ EXTREME FOOD
REFUSAL: THINGS
THAT HELP



Infants learn to like foods that they are given in the first year of life. They learn to accept different tastes, and they learn to cope with different textures. As they move into their second year, however, all toddlers start to show a fear of trying new foods. This fear is a normal part of development.

Some children find it very difficult to move through this stage. They are very worried about trying new foods, and may begin to reject many of the foods that they used to accept. These children may also find it difficult getting used to different tastes, smells and food textures. They have an inborn reluctance to move on to taking new foods. They feel safer just eating the few foods that they are used to.

It can be extremely worrying if your toddler constantly refuses to eat anything but a small number of different foods. At this stage, calorie intake is more important than a varied diet. However, there are a number of ways you can improve your child's diet.

Don't	Reason
Refuse to give high-energy foods, like ice cream, cakes, biscuits and chocolate, in the hope that your child will eat 'proper' meals and 'healthy' foods.	This is not a good way to get your child to eat new foods, and your child might lose weight if you withhold their safe foods.
Try to force your child to eat food.	This will make your child even more anxious at mealtimes, and may cause your child to vomit the food back up.
Leave long gaps between meals to try to make your child more hungry.	This will make your child less hungry over time, and may lead to weight loss.
Hide new foods inside foods that your child already likes. Your toddler may just stop eating the liked foods.	Some children can very easily detect new tastes and smells, even when hidden in other foods.

See **How to cope when your child shows extreme food refusal: things that help** for more guidance.

If the problem persists see your GP or health visitor who may refer you to a specialist feeding team if one is available in your area or a clinical psychologist.