

Is my child a picky eater?

TODDLER

ARTICLE

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While it's common for children to pick and choose what they want to eat, parents should also look for signs if their children are picky-eaters to supplement them with nutrients for their growth.

In Singapore, almost half of parents surveyed consider their little one to be a picky eater.

Wondering if your child is a picky eater? You're not alone.

Children often refuse to eat what's served to them, and parents often struggle to figure out if this is normal or if their child is extremely fussy.

In Singapore, almost half of parents surveyed consider their little one to be a picky eater. A third of them think it's big enough of an issue that they would consult a doctor about it¹.

Fussy (at times) is normal

It's absolutely normal for children to pick and choose what they want to eat. They are, after all, still exploring foods and the various tastes, flavours and textures they're introduced to each mealtime. Therefore, it's reasonable to expect that they're going to prefer foods they enjoy.

Plus, your child will have days when they feel like eating certain types of food, then shun the same item on another day. We all have moods and days when we don't feel like eating, and children are no different.

Their favourite foods and eating patterns may change every mealtime, too. This is why it's important not to focus on any one meal or day to

decide if your child is a picky eater. Instead, look at their overall eating habits.

Parents also, understandably, worry if their child is getting the nutrition they need, as their meals are often unfinished. Don't judge your child by what they nibble on in each meal, but whether or not they're getting a range of healthy foods over a few days or a week.

Why kids turn fussy over food

There are several reasons why kids become fussy eaters. In 2015, a review of dozens of studies on this topic was done, dating back decades. The conclusion was that picky eating could be affected by several issues, including personality traits, parental practices/feeding styles, social influences, and maternal eating habits².

Children certainly pick up some behaviours from their parents. Around 25 per cent of toddlers who are fussy eaters have parents who are picky too³.

So are your child's choosy eating habits just part of growing up or are they actually a picky eater? These are a few signs you have a picky-eating child on hand:

- Mealtimes drag on. Feeding your child can be a fun bonding experience. However, if your child takes more than 30 minutes to finish a meal, this is a sign that they're a picky eater.
- Your child needs mealtime distractions. When your child is having a meal, it should be all about finishing up the food served to them. But if your child needs distractions – such as toys, television or a computer tablet – to sit through a meal, this is picky eating.
- You don't enjoy mealtimes with your child. Having a meal with just your child or as a family should be a pleasant experience. However, if they're always difficult and you dread each meal, this could be because your child is a picky eater.
- Your child habitually rejects new foods. They might just take just one bite and reject any more. Or they downright refuse to even try it.
- Your child regularly loses interest in foods they previously liked. Kids' appetites are different at every meal and, sometimes, their tastes too. If your child loved something before but they're rejecting it now, they're picky. However, don't give up. If they liked it once, they'll probably eat it again – but don't pressure them to do so.
- Your child only eats certain types of foods. If they're rejecting entire food groups (eg. vegetables), they're picky eaters.

Supplement what's missing

Picky eating isn't the end of the world. Give your child a formula milk that supplements them with the nutrients they're missing out on. Suitable for toddlers and young children, Wyeth Nutrition Ascenda Milk Formula contains 38 high-quality ingredients that support physical growth and immunity. This formula also has DHA, which encourages brain and eye development.

References:

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4291945/>
2. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195666315003438>
3. <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/toddlers-and-fussy-eating>

