

## 7 TIPS FOR CREATING POSITIVE FOOD EXPERIENCES FOR FUSSY EATERS

“Will you please just try it!” “It’s good for you.” Does that sound all too familiar?

Many parents can relate because this has happened to most!

Fussy eating behaviours do not mean that a child is abnormal. In fact, quite the opposite. Fussy eating occurs in **30–50%** of children and these behaviours are considered a normal part of child development.<sup>1</sup>

Why, you may ask? Because as with everything in their life, children are learning and exploring their world. Young children need time (often years) to develop a liking and trust for a particular food. This process happens over time and many factors influence how their taste buds develop. **So, how do we get our child to eat what we want them to eat?**

Whilst research tells us that most of the time, fussy eaters still grow to their full potential,<sup>2</sup> it doesn’t make it any less stressful when they are sitting in front of a full plate, shaking their head.

Kids are all about fun and we need to incorporate this into our strategies for getting them to eat what we want them to eat.

If mealtimes are stressful and tense, kids will eat more poorly. If mealtimes are happy and relaxed, kids will be more open to exploring what is on their plate and trying new foods (over time).

Here are 7 tried and tested tips for creating positive food experiences for your child:

### 1 Schedule in food play activities

Engage in a food play activity on the weekend where you use different fruits and vegetables to make a funny face or animal on a plate.



### 2 Take your child shopping with you

Get them involved by asking them to choose some colourful fruit and vegetables.



### 3 Grow the food with them

Plant some cherry tomatoes or herbs in a pot and give your child the task of harvesting these and adding them into a dish.



## 4 Play a guessing game

Blindfold your child and have them guess what the food in front of them is.

## 5 Make smoothies

Get your child to choose some smoothie ingredients out of a bunch that you have chosen, so they are more likely to drink it.



## 6 Bake with them

Involve your child in measuring out ingredients, adding ingredients, stirring and tasting the final product.

## 7 Offer smaller serves of food

Smaller serve sizes of meals are less overwhelming for your child. You may add an oral nutritional supplement such as PediaSure to boost the nutritional value of the meal, helping to make every mouthful count. For more recipes using PediaSure visit [www.pediasure.com.au/recipes](http://www.pediasure.com.au/recipes).

All these fun food-related activities will help to “plant seeds” that eventually grow over the months and years. The journey with fussy eaters is a long one, but as frustrating as it is, know that you are not alone. Remembering that this is a normal part of a child’s development can help parents to stay positive and motivated.

For additional support for your child, speak to an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

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References: 1. Byrne R et al. *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity* 2017;14:123 DOI 10.1186/s12966-017-0582-z.  
2. Savage J et al. *J Law Med Ethics*. 35(1):22-34.

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