

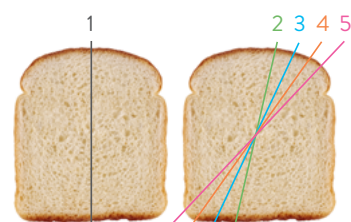
# HOW CAN I GET MY CHILD TO EAT WHEN THEY ARE SENSITIVE TO TASTE TEXTURE AND SMELL?

Understanding your child's sensory preferences around food can help maximise their nutritional intake. Here are some tips for how you can understand and work with your child's sensory preferences.

## 1 Serve food with 'just noticeable' differences

Every time you serve your child a new or preferred food, change it slightly. This is especially important if your child is an extreme picky eater or doesn't easily accept new foods.

Make a minor 'just noticeable' change to the shape, colour, texture, temperature or flavour each time you serve it. For example, cut sandwiches into different shapes, or add half a teaspoon of pureed fruit into yoghurt or custard or add a small serve of the same food from a different brand.



e.g. Sandwich cutting style week 1. Followed by weeks 2,3,4 and 5.

## 2 Work on small sensory stretches

Look out for patterns in the food that your child currently eats or previously ate. Filling in the chart to the right can help you to determine if there are any patterns to your child's preferences.

Your child may prefer foods that are crunchy, wet, round-shaped, very cold, or a certain colour. Once you notice any patterns, you can then start to serve foods which have very similar sensory qualities to help expand their food intake.

For example, if your child prefers round-shaped foods but currently eats a very limited range of vegetable and bread or cereal foods, you could offer them round-shaped vegetables such as carrots or sweet potato and use an egg ring to cut bread into circles.

**UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S SENSORY FOOD PREFERENCES**  
Use this chart to help you determine if there are any patterns to your child's preferences.

| Food group                     | SENSORY PREFERENCES |       |         |     |      |        |       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------|---------|-----|------|--------|-------|
|                                | Colour              | Shape | Crunchy | Wet | Soft | Crispy | Chewy |
| Fruit                          |                     |       |         |     |      |        |       |
| Vegetables                     |                     |       |         |     |      |        |       |
| Breads, grains or cereals      |                     |       |         |     |      |        |       |
| Meat or alternatives to meat   |                     |       |         |     |      |        |       |
| Dairy or alternatives to dairy |                     |       |         |     |      |        |       |
| Discretionary choices          |                     |       |         |     |      |        |       |

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### 3 Offer foods that your child prefers at every meal and snack

Offering a preferred food at each meal and snack will help your child feel safe, boost their confidence and increase their interest in the mealtime. This regular exposure to a wide range of foods is key to your child feeling comfortable and eventually feeling interested in trying new foods.

### 4 Maximise nutritional status

If your child is very sensitive to the sensory aspects of food, offering a liquid oral nutritional supplement can be a useful strategy to support nutritional intake. These products offer a high amount of nutrition in a small volume and will be consistent from a sensory perspective each time, which means your child is more likely to accept it.

### 5 Give it a break

To support your child with eating a variety of foods, it is helpful to offer a specific food in a specific presentation only once in a 2-day period. For example, your child may prefer cheese so offer shredded cheese one day, whole cheese slices the next and then melted cheese the day after. This will help your child to keep that food in their diet and not get tired of it.



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



## GROW STRONG