

MY CHILD ONLY EATS WHITE FOODS – HELP!

It can be really worrying when your child will only accept a limited range of foods.

Does your child select foods based on a sensory property, such as the colour or shape? If your child tends to only go for white foods, here are a few tips to make sure they get all the nutrition they need.

1 Figure out their sensory preferences

Work on understanding any patterns to your child's current and past food preferences. Once you identify any patterns, you can start to introduce foods from a range of food groups that match your child's sensory preferences.



This chart can help work out foods from each food group that will suit your child's preferences, so that they are offered a wide variety of foods and nutrients.

If your child prefers white foods and is lacking in vegetables you could offer white coloured vegetables such as white mushrooms, cauliflower or parsnip.

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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2 Consider chewing skills

Eating and drinking skills develop alongside changes in a child's gross motor skills which includes movement and coordination skills. If your child does not yet have the skills required for eating, they are much less likely to eat a wide variety of foods, preferring white foods such as cereal, hot chips and packaged snacks as they tend to be more processed and require minimal chewing.

Your child may be more willing to accept a wider range of foods if you offer those that are easy to chew. Examples include minced meats, marinated or tenderised meats, pancakes, breakfast cereals or oats, canned beans, scrambled eggs, white bean dip, soft or melted cheese, or stewed fruit. Your child may also benefit from an assessment by a Speech Pathologist to assess and improve their chewing skills.



3 Rigid eating behaviours

If your child displays very rigid behaviours and won't readily accept any new foods, introducing a liquid oral nutritional supplement can be an effective way to provide a wide range of nutrients, including essential vitamins and minerals, in a small volume. These products can be helpful as they have a consistent texture each time, so your child is more likely to accept them.



4 Mix it up with small food stretches

If your child has strong sensory preferences, stretch them very slowly from white foods to new foods that are dull in colour, such as dry breakfast cereals, custard, nut butter or nutmeal-based biscuits. You can also start by offering white foods mixed with foods of another colour, such as adding a teaspoon of flavoured yoghurt to plain yoghurt. You can also add a pea-sized new food to the child's meal and build up the portion over time.

5 Keep offering

It is natural for caregivers to only offer a child their preferred foods if they are picky eaters. A child can then become reliant on the idea that they will only ever be served foods that they prefer. This can make it very difficult to reintroduce other types of food to your child.

It is important to continue to offer small portions of new or previously eaten foods at each meal or snack. Don't expect that your child will eat these immediately. It may take more than 30 times before a child will even show an interest in a food that they don't currently eat. Keeping up the exposure is essential to support your child to accept a wider variety of foods.

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



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