

Feeding Fussy Eaters

Is your child a fussy eater? If the answer is yes, you are not alone! Did you know that between 25-40% of toddlers and young children are considered fussy eaters in Australia?¹ Getting a fussy eater to try new things can be exhausting and stressful, but small steps and repeated exposures have been shown to be very successful. So hang in there.

How much should my child eat?

The guidelines for children in Australia and New Zealand^{2,3} recommend your child eat from the following 5 food groups everyday.

- **Vegetables:** 2.5–5 serves per day
- **Fruit:** 1.5–2 serves per day
- **Grains:** 4–5 serves per day
- **Lean Meats, Legumes and Eggs:** 1–2.5 serves per day
- **Dairy:** 1.5–2.5 serves per day

What does a serve look like?^{2,3}

Vegetables:



1 whole carrot



½ cup of cooked peas or corn



1 cup of mixed green salad

Fruit:



1 medium banana



1 medium apple



2 small plums

Grains:



1 slice of bread



30g of wholegrain cereal



½ cup of cooked rice

Lean Meats, Legumes and Eggs:



1–2 eggs



1 can of tuna



80g of cooked chicken

Dairy:



1 cup of milk



¾ cup of yoghurt



2 slices of cheese (cheddar)

Please consult individual country guidelines for further information

Practical tips for parents

- Buffet style eating can help kids to choose from different foods. They have to pick at least one thing to try.
- Homemade pizzas and tacos are colourful and fun ways for children to build their own meal.
- Routine is very important. Try to offer three main meals and two snacks per day. Meal times should be consistent.
- Snacks too close to meal times can spoil their appetite for the main meal.
- If your child is particularly fussy, you can always try to sneak vegetables into foods. You can add grated carrots and zucchini to things like home-made pasta sauces.
- Current research suggests it may take 10-15 times⁴ before kids will try a new food. Keep persevering and offer foods every few days.
- Television and other electronic devices can distract children when they are eating. Turning them off can help children to pay attention to what they are eating and increase enjoyment.

Healthy Banana Bran Hotcakes

Delicious hotcakes with sneaky fruit and fibre

Makes: 10–12 hotcakes

Preparation Time: 15 mins

Cooking Time: 20 mins

Ingredients:

- 1 cup strawberries
- ½ banana
- 1 cup Kellogg's All Bran® Original
- 1½ cups wholemeal flour
- 1 cup of cow's milk, almond, oat or soy milk
- ½ cup plain Greek yoghurt
- 1 free range egg
- Oil for frying



Method:

- 1 Slice strawberries into thin slivers and set aside
- 2 Mash the banana with a fork and set aside
- 3 In a large bowl, mix cereal, flour and baking powder
- 4 Whisk together milk, yoghurt, egg and mashed banana
- 5 Combine wet and dry ingredients and then fold in the sliced strawberries
- 6 Grease a non-stick frypan with a little oil and heat to medium. When hot, spoon about ⅓ cup of batter onto the pan for each hotcake
- 7 Cook until lightly browned, flip, and cook until the second side is lightly golden
- 8 Serve immediately, or keep warm in low oven
- 9 Serve with a drizzle of maple syrup or honey

Easy vitamins and minerals for fussy eaters

Being a kid is hard work. They need nutrition to keep them active and alert. Kids who eat breakfast are able to cope much better at school.⁵

Breakfast cereal, because it is fortified with the essential vitamins and minerals they need for energy release, alertness and cognitive function, plus the goodness of fibre, is a good start for fussy eaters. And with the calcium and protein from milk, at least they start the day off right! Hopefully, this will give parents one less meal to worry about.

Your Health Professional Recommends

Fussy eating is stressful for parents, but there are professionals who can help if you are concerned. See a dietitian or a feeding therapist for more information.

¹ Byrne, R et al. International Journal of Behaviour, Nutrition and Physical Activity 2017; 14; 123

² Healthy eating for Children: Australian Dietary Guidelines: NHMRC 2013. Canberra, Australia

³ Eating for Healthy Children, from 2 to 12 years: NZ Ministry of Health 2017. New Zealand.

⁴ Ong, C et al. Singapore Medical Journal 2014; 55(4); 184-190.

⁵ Affenito, S et al. Journal of School Health 2013; 83(1); 28-35.

Disclaimer: These fact sheets are not meant to replace dietary advice provided by your doctor or dietitian. Please consult with your doctor or dietitian before making changes to your diet or physical activity routine.