

## **Barnsley Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service Eating and Drinking Advice for Children with Restricted Diets**

Your child may only like to have a small number of foods and drinks. They may be reluctant to try new foods. This advice will help your child to **maintain and increase** the number of foods and drinks they will try.

### **Tips**



- Have a routine at snack and mealtimes.
- Keep snack and mealtimes relaxed and fun.
- Rotate the foods that you give your child. This will stop them feeling bored at mealtimes and will help them be more flexible.
- Notice when your child shows you they are hungry, thirsty, they want more or have finished. Say the key word to them when you notice this.
- Use an object of reference. It could be a spoon or lunch box. Show the object to them every time you have a snack or a meal. This help your child know it is time for a snack or a meal.
- Do food play and messy play at home and at school or nursery. This works best when you follow your child's lead in play.
- Be flexible. When your child shows interest in food or drink let them touch it and even taste it. This can happen at different times to snacks and meals.
- Make small changes to meals regularly. This will help your child to accept changes. You could change a fork, spoon or cup they use. You could have another person at the mealtime with you. Keep the changes small. Do not make lots of changes in one go.

### **At home**

- Offer foods that your child knows and likes. Have one small item of 'new' food on the plate as well.
- Slowly work through the stages below. It can take time to move just one stage. This is ok.
- Sometimes children move a few stages in one mealtime. Be led by your child.
- To make progress your child needs to come very slightly out of their comfort zone. Do this with small steps and for small amounts of time. If your child gets upset at any stage, move back a step so they are happy.

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With **all of us** in mind.

## 7 Stages to accepting a new food:

1. Having the food on the plate
2. Touching the food on the plate
3. Picking up the food
4. Holding the food close to their mouth
5. Touching the food to lips
6. Tasting the food
7. Swallowing the food

## At School

- Build a clear routine at snack times and mealtimes.
- Work through the 7 stages with foods that other children in class are eating.
- Write down the foods that the child tries and the stage the child is at.
- Children can find touching wet foods challenging. Dry foods are usually easier to touch.
- Work with the child with a new food to the stage just slightly outside their comfort zone.
- Stop before they show distress.
- Use a 'finished' basket and a visual timetable. This will help the child know what happens next and when they are finished.
- The 'finished' basket can be a box or a washing up bowl. Try each item on the visual timetable. Then encourage the child to put any left-over food and cutlery in the basket.
- You can use symbols or draw a visual timetable of the foods to try. Put them in order. Be consistent with how many foods are on the timetable.
- Always put the new food first. Use the 7 step approach with this food. Then put 1 or 2 foods the child already eats next. Take off or cross out the picture after trying each food. Put the picture in the basket with the left-over food and cutlery.

This is an example of a visual timetable:



Remember all children can take up 15 tries of a new food before they accept it. For children worried about new foods it can take much longer.

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