

Strategies for Sensory Food Aversions

Collated by S. McLeod from the following links

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/fussy-eaters/>

[https://yourkidstable.com/sensory-processing-and-picky-eating/ Strategies for a Sensory Food Aversion](https://yourkidstable.com/sensory-processing-and-picky-eating/Strategies-for-a-Sensory-Food-Aversion)

These few tools can be very powerful when used consistently over a period of at least 4-6 weeks because they help to desensitize the sensory system.

- Play in a variety of **sensory bins** at least 5-6 times per week.
- Use a vibrating toothbrush two times a day...
- When **brushing teeth**, encourage your child to allow you to help, and brush the sides of the tongue top of the tongue and inside the cheeks as well.
- **Build on the textures** that your child is preferring. Think about making small changes to the foods they already like by changing up the brand, flavour, etc. This will help build a bridge to new foods in a way that is comfortable.
- Encourage them to **interact with the food** in some way. Take small steps. They may need to spend some time just touching the food to get used to the texture, for example.
- **Cook together.** This is a no-pressure time that allows exploration of new foods. Children will often feel brave enough to try something new in the fun and relaxed nature of the moment. Again, the key here is breaking down some of that sensitivity through the exploration of food.
- If the child tends to overfill /seeking texture, you will want to alternate crunchy bites of food with soft food. You can also give the cheeks a firm, but gentle squeeze if the stuffing or spitting out starts, or briskly stroke from the ears to the mouth a few times. This is to give input to help them process the sensation of the food better.

Tips to help support children with a limited diet:

- Give the same food as the rest of the family/snack time group
- The best way for children to learn to eat and enjoy new foods is to copy you through modelling. Try to eat with them as often as you can.
- Give small portions and praise for eating, even if they only eat a little.
- If the child rejects the food, do not force them to eat it. Just take the food away without saying anything. Stay calm and try the food again another time.
- Do not leave meals until the child is too hungry or **tired** to eat.
- The child may be a slow eater, so be patient.
- Do not give children too many snacks between meals – 2 healthy snacks a day is plenty.
- Do not to use food as a reward.
- Make mealtimes enjoyable and not just about eating. Sit down and chat about other things.
- Children can be encouraged to try new foods, just by being with others at mealtimes.
- Changing how you serve a food may make it more appealing. For example, your child might refuse cooked carrots but enjoy raw grated carrot.