

# Picky Eaters

Most children will go through a phase of picky eating; this often begins around the age of two to three years. Refusing food is one of the first ways children realise they can assert their independence. This can be worrying for parents but the key is to stay calm and not react in a negative way. Between birth and one year is when the most rapid rate of growth occurs in a child's life, after that it slows down dramatically, so don't worry if your toddler eats less in the first year. It is important to expose your child to a lot of flavours and textures so early as possible, as your baby's age allows.

Some children are wary of any new foods until it becomes familiar, neophobia is a fear of new things is common between the ages of 18 – 24 months; this is normal and doesn't necessarily mean your child is a poor eater. It is recommended that parents continue trying the new food with the child (up to 8 - 10 times) also when introducing new food to your child, try introducing only one food at a time, and just a small taste, if they refuse just try again a few days later.

A child may also have a poor appetite at mealtimes if they have grazed on too many snacks throughout the day, so as children get older, three meals with a snack between is each, is sufficient. Also make sure your child isn't filling up on too many drinks just before a meal, a one year old should be eating first and then having a drink of milk. In saying that make sure you offer water often throughout the day.

At mealtimes eat with your children as much as possible, if your child refuses food, continue eating your meal and don't be tempted to offer different food, otherwise this could become expected. Having toys or television on can distract the child from eating, so sitting together and enjoying the experience is important.

Too much food on the plate can be off putting so it's good to keep the portions small. Finger foods are usually a popular choice, adding plenty of vegetables to fritters and providing a dipping sauce, or raw vegetables (especially if your child doesn't like cooked vegetables) with a dip eg hummus or even little savouries (using bread cases) again with added vegetables and allowing them to serve themselves can be helpful.

**If that fails invite a friend that is a "good eater" over; children often eat what their friends are eating!**

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## Healthy Nibbles for Tots

Nutrition and Physical Activity Information for Under 5s

For more information visit: [www.cph.co.nz](http://www.cph.co.nz)

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