

# Faddy Eaters

Young children do not understand the importance of their diet. Toddlers and younger children with diabetes can go through stages of food refusal and faddy eating just like any child. Food strikes can be particularly frustrating when the threat of hypo is always at the back of your mind. It is important to be flexible whilst maintaining standards and consistent family rules around meal times.

Every child is different. The list below offers suggestions to help if your child is a faddy eater.

- Never force your child to eat. If your child is refusing to eat don't push them. Just take the plate away and offer one alternative. If this is refused, give them a drink that contains carbohydrate such as milk. At the next snack offer something nourishing like yoghurt or a small sandwich. Often falling blood glucose level will make your child hungry and more willing to eat.
- Ensure that your child has regular meal and snack times. Drinks can be filling so try not to let your child drink continuously. If your child is thirsty, it may indicate their blood glucose level is raised.
- Aim to eat together as a family and make meals enjoyable.
- Avoid battles.
- Only offer small amounts at a time. Your child can always ask for more.
- Praise your child if they eat their meal. Children thrive on attention. Food refusal is often a way of seeking attention. Make sure that your child gets more attention for doing good things, not for behaviour that you would like to see less of.
- Try to make food interesting by offering different tastes, colours and flavours.
- Don't worry if your child will only eat two or three foods, as these foods will usually change over a few weeks. Continue to offer different foods, but don't fuss if they are not eaten. You may need to offer the same food many times before it is accepted.



- Remember chocolate and sweet foods are not forbidden, but should be limited in all healthy diets. However, children's constant demands for sweet foods can be difficult to refuse. Feel confident to say, "NO" as too many sweet foods are not good for any child.
- Avoid treating hypos with sweets or chocolates. A toddler or young child will quickly learn bad habits such as not eating to cause a hypo, or falsely claiming to feel hypo to get a tasty sweet. Glucose tablets or high-energy glucose drinks are best.

Your child will be weighed and measured regularly at the diabetes clinic. As long as their weight gain is steady, you should not become overly concerned – your child is managing to get enough energy for growth, even if their overall diet is not ideal.

**Remember, faddy eating is usually a phase that many children experience and it causes no lasting problems if managed consistently. Seek help if you need further support or guidance to keep things on track.**



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