

10 tips for selective eating

Encouragement, a positive atmosphere and time are useful on the path to food confidence. There are usually no quick fixes when it comes to broadening a selective eater's diet, but these 10 tips can help you make progress over time.



- 1. Introduce new flavours and foods along with old favourites.**
Do not hide ingredients! Talk honestly about what is on the plate and encourage the child to taste the food. Always offer something at the meal that you know your child will like.
- 2. Serve clearly identifiable ingredients.**
Some children will taste dishes with ore confidence, if the ingredients do not touch each other on the plate and are easily recognisable. Vegetables may taste better on their own than mixed into a salad.
- 3. Encourage to taste, do not force.**
Pushing, forcing, pressuring and comparing your child to other children are sure to take the joy out of eating. Do not blame the child, for example, for eating bread, even if the main dish remained on the plate. Pay attention to successes (even if they are small ones). "I'm happy that the tomato was already on your plate, even though it didn't make it to your mouth yet".
- 4. Serve a small amount of food on the plate initially.**
Whenever possible, let the child serve themselves the amount of food they want. There is always more food available, but a portion that is too large can overwhelm a small eater from the outset.
- 5. Eat together as often as possible and offer the whole family the same food.**
A child is more likely to eat food that the parents are also eating. You can set aside a simpler version for children, for example before adding strong spices. A relaxed atmosphere at the table and spending time together with parents can make mealtimes feel enjoyable and something to look forward to. Children learn by example.
- 6. Eliminate distractions from meal times.**
Beeping phones and games, as well as unfinished play, do not belong at the dinner table. Tell your child when they can resume playing. A good way to create a calmer mealtime is to give your child some time to finish their play before coming to eat. As a parent, lead by example and make mealtimes calm: don't answer your phone or glance at the TV.
- 7. Involve the child in cooking.**
Allow the child to participate in the preparation of food from time to time. Younger children can already wash potatoes, older children can prepare a salad. Vegetables that you chipped yourself are more tempting. Tasting is easier when there is no pressure to eat. Make the most of these moments – encourage and praise every effort.
- 8. Maintain a regular meal rhythm for the child.**
Offer food regularly, even if your child doesn't feel like eating at every meal.
- 9. Remember to talk positively about food.**
Give encouraging feedback when tasting and mealtimes have gone even slightly in the desired direction. Even if the food is left uneaten, say something encouraging, such as: "You did a great job sitting at the table today, thank you." A child not eating can be frustrating, but try to keep your emotions in check. The child senses the worry and irritation of the parent.
- 10. Relaxed relationship with food.**
Being overly rigid about food isn't helpful for children or adults. Do not emphasise the health benefits of foods or divide them into allowed and prohibited foods. For example, a complete ban on treats can increase the child's interest in them. Being flexible doesn't mean that you can always eat whatever you want. There's no need to make too big a deal about treats or use them as a reward, but they can still be part of a varied and balanced diet.

