

# Supporting Parents & Fussy Eaters

## Tips for supporting your child's sensory needs to make mealtimes less stressful

All senses are stimulated during mealtimes:

- **Sight:** the colour and presentation of meals.
- **Sound:** the sound of eating the meal.
- **Smell and taste:** the scent and flavours of the meal.
- **Feel:** texture in the mouth and hands.
- **Environment:** the social setting.

Some sensory information can lead to anxiety and may reduce the enjoyment of meals.

### What does fussy eating look like?

- Poor weight gain or weight loss.
- Trouble swallowing or gagging during meals.
- Avoiding textures of food groups.
- Eating a limited variety of food.
- Delayed transition to solids from purées.

### Speech Pathologists can help fussy eaters

Speech Pathologists can assist fussy eaters by helping parents identify sensory seeking or sensory avoidance behaviours during mealtimes. They address these behaviours to create a more enjoyable experience with food. Strategies need to be tailored to each child.

#### Speech Pathologists can:

- Work with parents to create positive mealtime routines.
- Teach parents to recognise the child's communication cues.
- Recommend ways to adapt mealtimes which meet the child's sensory needs.
- Provide support for introducing new foods, textures, scents, and flavours.



### Tips for creating enjoyable mealtimes

- 1 Allow your child to explore their food by eating with their hands, helping prepare meals or talking about the history of the meal.
- 2 Increase your child's exposure to difference foods by having them in the home or eating the food around them.
- 3 Enhance your child's understanding of hunger and satiety by offering food at specified mealtimes throughout the day.
- 4 Offer various textures and flavours at a young age.
- 5 Introduce novelty into mealtimes to enhance the food or drink experience.

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