



7

Repeat

It may take 10–20 exposures (or more!) of a new food before it is accepted into their diet

6

Swallow

5

Bite

Allow to spit out

4

Lick

3

Touch

Using hand or utensil

2

Smell

1

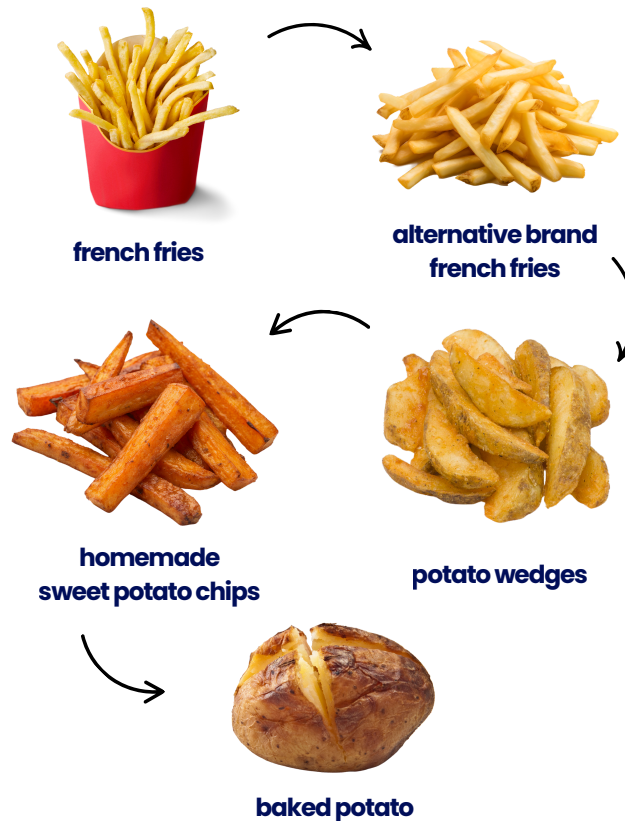
Look

On a separate plate

Start here!

Some children prefer just one type or brand of food. Food chaining is when you start with what they like and slowly introduce new foods that are similar in colour, texture, or flavour. These steps of introducing new foods need to be small, and the pace of the food chain should be dictated by the child.

A food chain is also not linear, at any point you can branch off and start a new chain toward a new food. It is not force feeding, there should not be pressure to eat anything and preferred foods should always be offered alongside new foods. Here is an example:



Fussy Eating

A guide to help
your child accept
new foods

Introduction

Fussy and selective eating are common behaviours in children. This is where a child often refuses to eat certain foods or try new ones, leading to them to eat only a few types of food. These are usually plain or beige foods such as pasta, bread, or snacks, and they might refuse healthier foods like fruits, vegetables, meat or fish.

Children may avoid these foods because of their texture, colour, smell or be sensitive to how they look on the plate. This can be difficult for parents to manage, but fussy eating is a normal part of growing up.

This guide provides strategies to help your child accept new foods. If fussy eating continues for a long period of time, it can cause problems with nutrition or be related to sensory issues and anxiety. In this case you should contact your GP or health visitor.



Parent workshop

Flying Start offer Fussy Eating workshops to parents with children over 12 months.



Positive Mealtimes

Routine

Offer 3 meals and 2 snacks per day around the same time.

Language is important

Using directive or evaluative language such as “you must eat this” can create pressure. Instead, try using neutral, descriptive language that focuses on the sensory experience of the food itself, encouraging curiosity and exploration. For example, “this is bright red and crunchy” invites interest and reduces tension.

Eat together

When possible so that meals are a shared, social experience and adults can role model behaviour.

Time

Allow around 30 mins for each meal and avoid snacks too close to mealtimes.



Division of responsibility

Offer a choice of two options to give the child some autonomy.

Involve Children

Children helping **prepare** their meal takes away the surprise and they may feel more curious and confident to try new foods.

Also try and allow children to **serve** themselves.



Messy Play

Creating positive experiences with food outside of mealtimes can reduce anxiety and pressure around eating.

