

# When is Choosy Eating a Problem?



Choosy eating is common and is often a sign that a child is becoming more independent. Choosy eaters typically become less picky over time, but some may require professional support in order to change their eating habits. Your observations of a child's eating behavior can help identify the extent of the problem.

- Acting out at meal and snack times may be a child's way of avoiding new foods or a coping strategy for sensory or oral-motor problems which are causing discomfort.
- Seek professional advice when choosy eating impacts a child's physical or mental health.
- Eating problems are complex and generally require a team approach.

**TIP**

Consider asking a professional such as an Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Pathologist or Behavioral Psychologist to observe the child at mealtimes. These professionals can determine when an eating behavior requires further attention.

**When to Be Concerned**

- The number and types of foods a child eats decrease over time.
- The food that a child eats does not provide adequate nutrition.
- A child refuses an increasing number of foods that are offered.
- A child develops ritualistic eating behavior, such as demanding to only eat a certain brand of crackers.
- A child frequently gags, spits up, or vomits food.
- A child refuses to feed himself.
- A child's limited diet gets in the way of their ability to eat with others.
- Mealtimes revolve around the child's eating problems. For example, the child has tantrums or their meal lasts longer than 40 minutes.
- The child has significant weight gain or loss.