Nutrition - Restrictive Eating

Brief Informational Guide



Feeding issues are common in autistic children and can be stressful for you & your child. Consistency & patience are key when supporting a child to overcome feeding difficulties. There are many types of professionals who can help you turn the stress into success!

Feeding Difficulties are Common

Research has shown that approximately 69% of autistic children are unwilling to try new foods!

Scan Me

Something to Note!

Almost half of autistic children have an eating ritual.

Overview

There are many factors that contribute to food selectivity. How food tastes, looks, smells, and feels; experiences related to food; insistence on sameness; physical and oral motor skills/abilities; medication side effects; and some medical conditions can lead to feeding difficulties.

Questions to think about and discuss with your physician:



Does your child eat items from all five food groups?
Not eating foods from one or more food groups (dairy, fruits, vegetables, grains, protein) could lead to nutritional deficiencies.



Does your child drink water, milk, and juice? If so, how much?
Drinking too much milk or juice may affect a child's appetite.



Does your child eat less than 20 foods? Less than 10 foods?
If your child eats less than 20 foods, that is considered a picky eater. Consuming less than 10 foods is considered a problem eater. Check in with your physician or refer to a registered dietician.



Does your child have meals & snacks at the same time every day?
Regular times for meals & snacks will increase the likelihood that your child will be hungry when it is time to eat.



Does your child eat meals at the table?
Eating meals at the table establishes a routine that benefits the whole family!



Does your child eat non-food items?
If your child consumes non-food items, they could be experiencing pica. If you think your child may have pica, consult with your physician.



Do you offer your child new foods regularly?
It is best to offer your child new foods regularly, even if you don't think they will eat them!

ECHO AUTISM COMMUNITIES
echoautism.org

Next Steps

Get Creative!

Using fun methods to introduce new foods to your child may get them excited to try it. With your child, you can do any of the following.

Examples:

- Make kabobs using one of the child's preferred foods and a new food.
- Use cookie cutters to turn pancakes, sandwiches, or other soft food items into fun shapes.
- Use sprinkles or food coloring to change the color of milk, mashed potatoes, or oatmeal.

Pediasure Recipe Ideas

- French Toast
- Guacamole
- Veggie Lasagna
- Breakfast Burrito
- Pizza Frittata
- Muffins
- Chocolate Ice Pops
- Mac and Cheese
- Pancakes
- Banana Shake

For More Ideas Visit: www.pediasure.ca/en/recipes

Medication and Feeding

Some medicines, commonly stimulants, cause children to have less of an appetite. It is important to choose filling foods for your child if they eat small amounts. This can include:

- whole milk, yogurt, cheese
- muffins, pancakes, oatmeal
- meats, eggs, nut butters, nuts

Multivitamin use on a short term basis (3-4 months) can help supplement nutritional deficiencies while working on improving variety.

Be creative: Some parents have found that certain brands of chicken nuggets taste very similar to some popular fast food brands!

Supplements and Fluid Needs

- ☐ Pediasure _____
- ☐ Water _____
- ☐ Vitamins _____
- ☐ Other _____



Referrals

- ☐ Feeding Clinic
- ☐ Dietitian
- ☐ Occupational Therapy
- ☐ Speech Therapy
- ☐ Behavior Therapy

Resources

- ☐ Eatright.org
- ☐ Choosemyplate.gov
- ☐ Parent's Guide to Feeding Behavior in Children with Autism
- ☐ ECHO Autism website



NOTES:

If you have questions about nutrition, please talk to your healthcare clinician.