



Picky Eaters Family Programme



MOVE MORE INVITES YOU TO JOIN OUR FUSSY EATER FAMILY PROGRAMME!



<https://youtu.be/GfMXCEousfc>

You prepare nutritious meals for your family only to be met with “Yuk! I won’t eat that!” attitude. Your children refuse to eat anything that’s not “beige” or doesn’t start with a letter “P” - pasta and pizza. Sometimes they even refuse to sit at the table or use knife and fork. For the peace in the house and your own sanity, you give up and just serve what they want, where and when they want it. Or, if you are more stubborn, you keep nagging and bribing for them to eat just one more bite. Does this sound familiar? Are mealtimes a challenge in your household? Would you describe your child as a “picky” or “fussy” eater? If yes, this programme is for you.

It has been created to help you understand why children can be “picky” when it comes to food and to empower you with tools to help them have a good relationship with food in the long run. Because it is worth remembering that bigger picture: when children grow up most of us want them to have good eating habits and enjoy food. But not many of us realise that not every parenting approach will help our children get there. So, during the next 6 weeks we will be sharing an equal number of facts and practical ideas to help you empower your children to improve their relationship with food and eating.

To do that, you need to:

- Read each installment of the programme;
- Reflect where you are at with regards to topics discussed;
- Use the tools suggested in a way that fits your family and your life;
- Take part in the programme and share your results!
- Join our closed Facebook page for more ideas, tips and ongoing support;
- Share your thoughts/progress/feedback with us via email (marijana@move-more.org) and/or via social media (Facebook page)

At the end of the process, all the families that take part in the programme and share their activities with us will be put into the prize draw – the winners will be announced at the end of the programme.

We can’t wait to hear and see how you are getting on! Good luck!

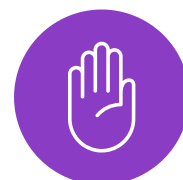
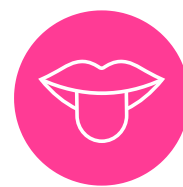
All weeks reserources can be found below:

<https://bit.ly/MM-Picky-Eaters>



What you need to know to understand picky eating – interesting fact No5: **Could it be sensory?**

We perceive the world through our senses, and these can significantly impact our relationship with food. Sensory sensitivities can be triggered by the way food tastes, smells or by its texture and appearance. Practically this can look like a child refusing to eat a food because of its smell, although they might like the taste of the food. If your child has sensory sensitivities around food, they are not just being awkward and fussy – they actually experience distress when presented with food that affects their senses in an unfavourable way.



Understanding sensory processing is crucial for understanding potential food related sensory issues. Sensory processing is about our ability to interpret tastes, sounds, sights, smells, touches and movement from the environment and it is unique to every child (and adult). We receive sensory inputs all the time. Eating is a massive sensory experience that most adults take for granted as we have been desensitized to the smells, flavours and textures of food. Some children, however, have not. This is why in the first few years of a child’s life, eating and mealtimes are about processing sensory inputs they receive from different types of food.

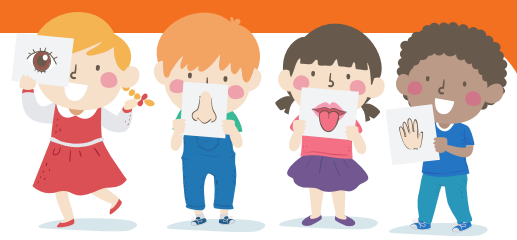
So, if a child becomes picky around food, this can often be down to that food being processed in their brain as uncomfortable in one way or another. This can take the child down the path of a limited diet. However, there are things that you as an adult can do to help them with this. See our suggestions below to find out more.

NB. Here we are addressing typical and relatively minor sensory sensitivities and not talking about more complex behaviours (e.g. ARFID – Avoidant restrictive food intake disorder). If you feel like that your child’s eating behaviours and sensory sensitivities are more extreme, please contact your healthcare professional.

The Family Mealtime Makeover Principle 5: “EXPLORE MORE”

“Help your child’s sensory sensitivities by regularly exposing them to foods of different textures, smells, tastes, colours...”

Although your child’s brain might be currently wired to perceive some foods as uncomfortable, the good news is that brain is extremely plastic which means that it is able to learn new things, change and rewire itself. This happens when a child (or an adult) is being exposed to different experiences in a gentle and supportive way.



The more they have the same experience, the stronger the connection in their brain becomes. This then allows them to respond differently because they use a new connection to process sensory information.

NB. Be mindful that sensory sensitivities might not always just focus on avoiding certain inputs. Sometimes children have strong need to seek certain sensory inputs. For example, some children might be more drawn towards strong tasting food, crunchy food, food that is hard to bite into and similar. This can also cause picky eating because children may struggle to feel, for example, certain soft textures in their mouth and avoid eating them.

MEALTIME MAKEOVER 4

Here are suggestions on how you can apply the principle of regularly exposing children to foods that offer varied sensory input:

- 1** When we are anxious or stressed, our senses become heightened and a child might be more likely to have a more extreme reaction to a food that doesn't provide the sensory input that is favourable. That is why ensure that mealtimes are stress free (refer to previous weeks to help you with this).
- 2** If your child is struggling with visual inputs, you can try to remove food out of packaging before offering it to the child. You can also work with familiar foods first and change the visual property of the food slightly in front of the child to try and desensitise them in this way. For example, if your child insists on their food being cut in a certain way, try doing some of it just slightly differently to start with.
- 3** If your child is more likely to avoid eating certain foods due to the way they smell, you can put those foods on the table, cover with a serviette and leave it there for the duration of the mealtime.
- 4** If your child is struggling to sit at the table and has the need to move, you can encourage them to engage in some vigorous movements right before they are due to eat. You can also put some weight on their lap and ensure that their feet are resting on something.
- 5** If your child is struggling with the sound of themselves or others eating, you can maybe use some background music to cover up these unfavourable sounds.
- 6** If the taste is a potential issue you can encourage your child to touch, lick, dip the food into a sauce as a gradual process of them eventually tasting it. Also, make sure that there is a "spitting cup (or a serviette)" so they can dispose of food that they tasted but are not yet ready to eat fully.



WEEK FIVE




MOVE MORE

EVERY CHILD ACTIVE







Finally, encourage children to interact with food in as many different ways as possible. You can do this by allowing them to help you with food preparation and cooking and by promoting sensory exploration and play with food. You can use our Explore more activity to get you started with this!

TODAY'S SPOTLIGHT FOOD




EXPLORE MORE


THIS FOOD TASTE BETTER UNCOOKED
 THIS FOOD TASTE BETTER WHEN COOKED
 I LIKE THE SMELL OF THIS FOOD
 THIS FOOD FEELS CRUNCHY
 THIS FOOD GIVES ME ENERGY
 THIS FOOD FEELS SMOOTH TO HOLD
 THIS FOOD FEELS ROUGH TO HOLD
 I DON'T LIKE THIS FOOD YET BUT MIGHT DO WHEN I'M OLDER
 THIS FOOD TASTES SWEET
 THIS FOOD FEELS SQUIDGY
 THIS FOOD HAS A MILD, PLAIN FLAVOUR
 THIS FOOD HAS A STRONG, POWERFUL FLAVOUR
 THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE VEGETABLES
 THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE FRUITS
 I LIKE THE COLOUR OF THIS FOOD
 THIS FOOD TASTES BITTER
 SOME DAYS I LIKE THIS FOOD AND SOME DAYS I DON'T
 THIS FOOD IS GOOD FOR MY BODY AND MIND
 I DON'T LOVE THIS FOOD YET BUT I LIKE TO TRY IT NOW AND THEN

Think about how this food **looks, feels, smells & tastes** to you.


Colour in all of the  statements that you agree with in relation to this food. There is no right or wrong answer!

Today I rate this food **10** but as I grow older this might go up or down!



You are invited to join our **NEW PARENT FACEBOOK GROUP** for participating schools. Click on the link to join Move More's Family Health programme 2023/24 & share your feedback, photos or videos of your new **MEALTIME MAKEOVER** dinner tables!



We hope you and your child(ren) find the programme both helpful, engaging and informative. Join in healthy discussion topics and share tips and ideas  **#PickyEaters**

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