
MEALTIMES

It is good to get to the point where children can eat the same food as the rest of the family. While some children are interested in trying new tastes other children can be fussy about what they eat.

If this is the case it can be very easy to lapse into a pattern where the child gains loads of attention for refusing food. Not a good idea!! Children will have likes and dislikes in the same way as adults. Better to play down the fact that they don't want to eat what you've given them and avoid getting into coaxing and bribing. If a child clearly doesn't want to eat it – allow him to leave it.

Making sure that the food is attractive, that portions are not piled high and that your child isn't filling up with too many snacks between meals can all help. When children eat with the rest of the family and mealtimes are pleasant and relaxing rather than a frantic rush with the television blaring and loads of distractions, they will be more inclined to eat their food. The approach taken by the family towards eating can contribute to the way children think of food as they grow up. Mealtimes should not be a time for rows or an occasion when children are forced to eat.

Q

We go to my in-laws every Sunday and I dread it. My mother-in-law believes that children should be grateful for their food and should finish what is on their plate. My little boy of three isn't a great eater and I'm not worried about that, but I can see his little face getting anxious when the food comes out.

A

You are right not to worry about his diet as long as he is healthy.

Your child cannot get himself out of this situation so you need to take charge. Either you or your husband needs to have a polite but firm word with Granny. She needs to know that while she has her own views you do not want your little boy to be pressured about food. Either that stops or you need to go to see her and not have a meal. The sooner that happens the better.

