



Encouraging Your Child to Explore New Foods

A step-by-step guide

1

Step 1
It can be very frustrating when you have cooked a meal for your child and they don't eat it or even touch it. Some people love trying new foods, but for many children with complex feeding difficulties, accepting a new food may take weeks, months or even years. These ideas are designed to help you make progress with your child's acceptance of different foods. This may lead to them trying new foods as well. **Remember – Don't Give Up!** Repetition is the key to success, and for some children change takes a long time.

2

Step 2
Sensory eating issues are very individual to each child so think about exactly what you want to achieve. Examples:-

- Correcting growth deficiencies and micronutrient status.
- Eating a larger range of foods.
- Becoming comfortable eating in front of others.
- Becoming less fearful of choking or vomiting.
- Increasing interest towards food.
- Reducing anxiety surrounding food and eating.
- Being more comfortable being around different foods
- Being able to sit with others whilst they are eating

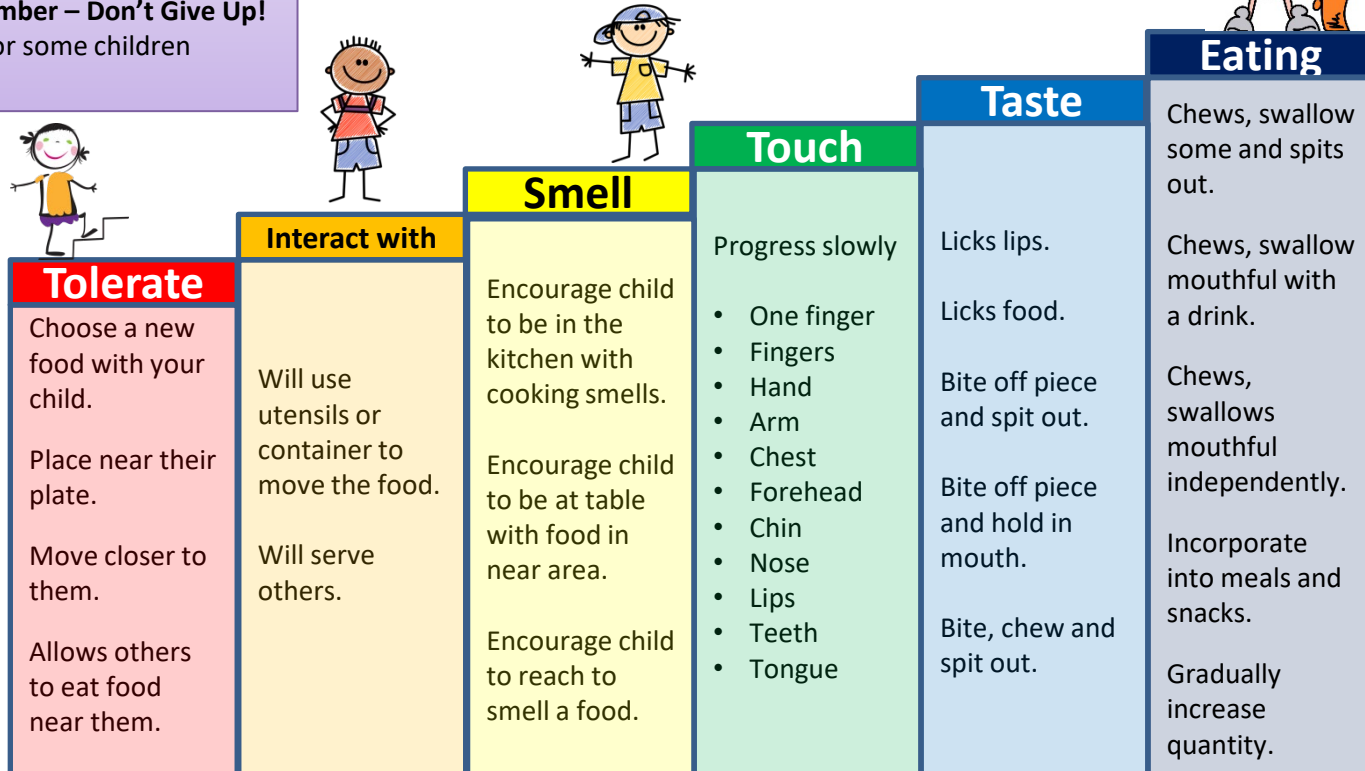
Set 1 or 2 goals. Be specific and realistic.



3

GOALS

Set Specific, Realistic Goals:



4

Step 4

1. Work out where your child is now on the steps. It may be different places for different foods.
2. Focus on next steps moving up from there at your child's pace.
3. Select a small number (maximum 3) new foods and try these on a regular basis. It is best to make these foods that you have easily available at home.
4. Encourage your child to be involved in choosing the foods to try.
5. Place small amounts of each food (e.g. 1 tsp) on a plate and encourage your child to interact with these foods at their pace, using the steps to guide you. This might be to look at the food, smell the food or touch the food.
6. This is usually best done outside of mealtimes and when you and your child are relaxed and have time.
7. Repeat, repeat, repeat in a non-pressured, relaxed way.
8. Move up the steps at their pace using encouragement but NEVER force them.
9. Explore new foods regularly, every day if possible. Repetition should help to reduce anxiety.

5

Tips for Success

1. Demonstrating behaviour is essential to success, so close family should be regularly eating and enjoying the foods you are asking them to explore.
2. You must ensure you reduce stress and pressure to eat – this is never helpful to improving intake or acceptance of foods.
3. Praise any positive step forward but don't punish refusal.
4. If at all possible, get the child involved, give them some control with choosing which foods to explore and how they will explore them.
5. Success may not be your child eating a new food but may be them being able to eat at the table with you, even if their meal is totally different to yours.

For more information:

- arfidawarenessuk.org
- beateatingdisorders.org.uk/types/arfid
- fussy eating and complex feeding website (QR code)



Your Dietitian

Your Dietitian is:

Rev 2.1

Author: First Dietitians

Date: Nov 2020

Review: March 2026

Contact Details:

First Dietitians

First Dietitians
3rd Floor, Crawley Hospital
West Green Drive
Crawley, RH11 7DR

FCHC.firstdietitians@nhs.net

Tel: 01293 600406

For appointments: 01293 600314