

FOOD *fiends*

TURNING YOUR CHILD FROM A RELUCTANT EATER INTO A MEALTIME CONNOISSEUR CAN BE A TRICKY TASK. HERE'S HOW TO TEMPT YOUR LITTLE FUSSPOT...

Weaning can be one of the most confusing journeys for a parent. One minute your little one is wolfing down a parsnip purée like his life depends on it, the next he's turning his nose up at his favourite dish. Fear not, because picky eating is often par for the course, but there are plenty of gentle tactics to help get your child happily clearing his plate. Here our experts guide you through some key fussy eating frustrations...

Q I got off to a good start weaning my 7 month old, but in the past few weeks he's started refusing to take anything off a spoon. Am I back to square one?

A Health visitor Annette Maloney says "Weaning can be a stop-start affair for some babies. Adjusting to new textures, food types, utensils and sitting up is a tall order – especially when he's asked to do them all at once! Little setbacks are common, and nothing to worry about, but there are various

things you can do to help get him back on the right track.

Try offering a few different foods on a plate and let him pick them up and feed himself. Don't worry if at first he just spends all his time squishing, squashing and sucking – it's completely normal. And when you do offer him food on the spoon, make sure he has a spoon to hold too, as the more freedom he has to be independent, the more adventurous and confident he'll become."

Q My little girl loves fruit but won't eat vegetables. I've tried to give her a varied diet but she simply refuses. What can I do to make veggies more appealing?

A Clinical nutritional therapist Catherine Jeans says "Although it can be hard to get babies to eat vegetables, particularly the more bitter-tasting ones, the key is to be persistent. If you only offer fruit, you're likely to encourage her to develop a sweet tooth, so try making her vegetable purées with a touch of sweetness from butternut squash or



DID YOU KNOW?
42% of UK toddlers are fussy eaters*

Feature Amanda Pauley Images Shutterstock *According to study of 1,000 parents with children under the age of 4 by MyVoucherCodes.com



GOLDEN RULE!

There's no need to wait any longer than a day between introducing new foods to your baby

3 PICKY EATING TRIGGERS

TEETHING Sore gums and restless nights can often make your baby less likely to try new things.

TUMMY BUGS If he's ill, eating and exploring new textures is not a good idea – wait until he's feeling better.

CHANGE IN ENVIRONMENT Babies love routine, so moving house or sending him to a different nursery can be a bit distracting at first.

sweet potato. But seeing as your child has a preference for fruit, don't be afraid to mix them in with vegetables in order to get her to eat a more varied diet. You can even use a technique of alternating a spoonful of savoury purée with a spoonful of sweet to open up those taste buds, but, above all, make sure you persevere with new foods. Your baby's tastes will keep changing, and what she doesn't like today can become a firm favourite in the future."

Q Up until now my daughter has been a dream to wean, but for some reason she won't eat meat. When I give it to her she just spits it out. What can I do to make it seem more appealing?

A **Dr Rana Conway says** "Meat is an important source of iron for growing babies, so it's only natural for you to feel anxious that your daughter's not taking to it. Have you tried introducing it in different

ways? Some meat can be hard to chew, so giving her minced meat in dishes like cottage pie or spaghetti bolognese is the best way to start. Simple patés, made from puréeing meat dishes, spread on toast are great, and finger foods, such as a strip of chicken breast that can be sucked and chewed more slowly, will also get her curiosity going. If you're struggling, chickpeas, beans and lentils have almost the same nutrients as meat, so try offering her them too."

For more tips and advice on weaning, and to talk to other mums at the weaning stage, see

Babyexpert.com

Q My son won't touch a purée at all, and cries if I persist. All he wants is milk. Help!

A **Clinical nutritional therapist Catherine Jeans says** "First things first, ask yourself whether your baby is actually ready to wean. If he's 6 months old and showing little interest in purées, there's no need to panic. Weaning is a gradual process and he has enough nutrient stores in his body to tide him over while he gets used to solids. But don't expect him to go straight from milk to a full meal, as the early stages are about getting him used to the taste and texture of food. Your baby should be eating solids by 9 to 12 months, so while it's important to stay calm, do persevere with new foods. Try different flavours, offering tiny amounts at a time, and never giving a full milk feed before a purée. Mixing baby rice or puréed fruit with breast or formula milk can help him become familiar with solid textures too." **PE**