


Help..... My Child with Diabetes Won't Eat!





Small children do not understand the importance of their diet and a toddler with diabetes may go through stages of food refusal and faddy eating just like any other child. Food strikes can be particularly frustrating when the threat of hypo is always at the back of your mind. It is important that you try to be flexible and compromise as much as possible without letting yourself be manipulated.

Every child is different but the following are a few pointers to help you cope with a faddy eater:

- Never force a child. If a child is refusing to eat, don't push it. Just take the plate away. Give a carbohydrate-containing drink instead, such as milk or unsweetened fruit juice. Offer something more nourishing like yoghurt or a small sandwich at the next snack. Often the child's falling blood sugar will cause hunger and a desire to eat.
- Try to ensure your child has regular meal and snack times. Drinks can be filling so try not to let your child drink continuously. If your child is thirsty, it may be a reflection of blood glucose control.
- Try to eat together as a family and make meals enjoyable. Avoid battles.
- Offer only small amounts at a time. Your child can always ask for more.
- Offer lots of praise if a meal is eaten. Food refusal is often attention seeking and so make sure your child gets the attention for doing good things, not bad.
- Try to make foods interesting by offering different tastes, colours and flavours.
- Don't worry if your child will only eat 2 or 3 foods, as these foods will usually change over a few weeks. Continue to offer different foods but don't make a fuss if they are not eaten.
- Sometimes a child will constantly demand sweets and it can be difficult to refuse. However, don't forget that too many sweets are not good for any child – therefore don't be afraid to say 'no'. After all, chocolate and sweet foods are not forbidden but should be limited as they should be in any healthy diet.
- Try not to treat hypos with sweets or chocolates. A toddler will quickly learn that by not eating and consequently developing a low blood sugar, they will get a tasty treat. It is more appropriate to use Lucozade or glucose tablets.

Try to be reassured that in most families, faddy eating is usually a phase, causing no lasting problems. Your child will be weighed and measured regularly at clinic. As long as their weight gain is steady, you should try not to become over concerned as your child is obviously managing to take sufficient calories, even if their overall diet is not ideal.

Websites

www.bda.uk.com

www.diabetes.org.uk

www.coeliac.org.uk

www.canderel.co.uk

www.splenda.co.uk

www.infantandtoddlerforum.org

www.runsweet.com

For further information or advice please contact the Paediatric Dietitians at Ashford and St Peter's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust:

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Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email pals@asph.nhs.uk. If you remain concerned, PALS can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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