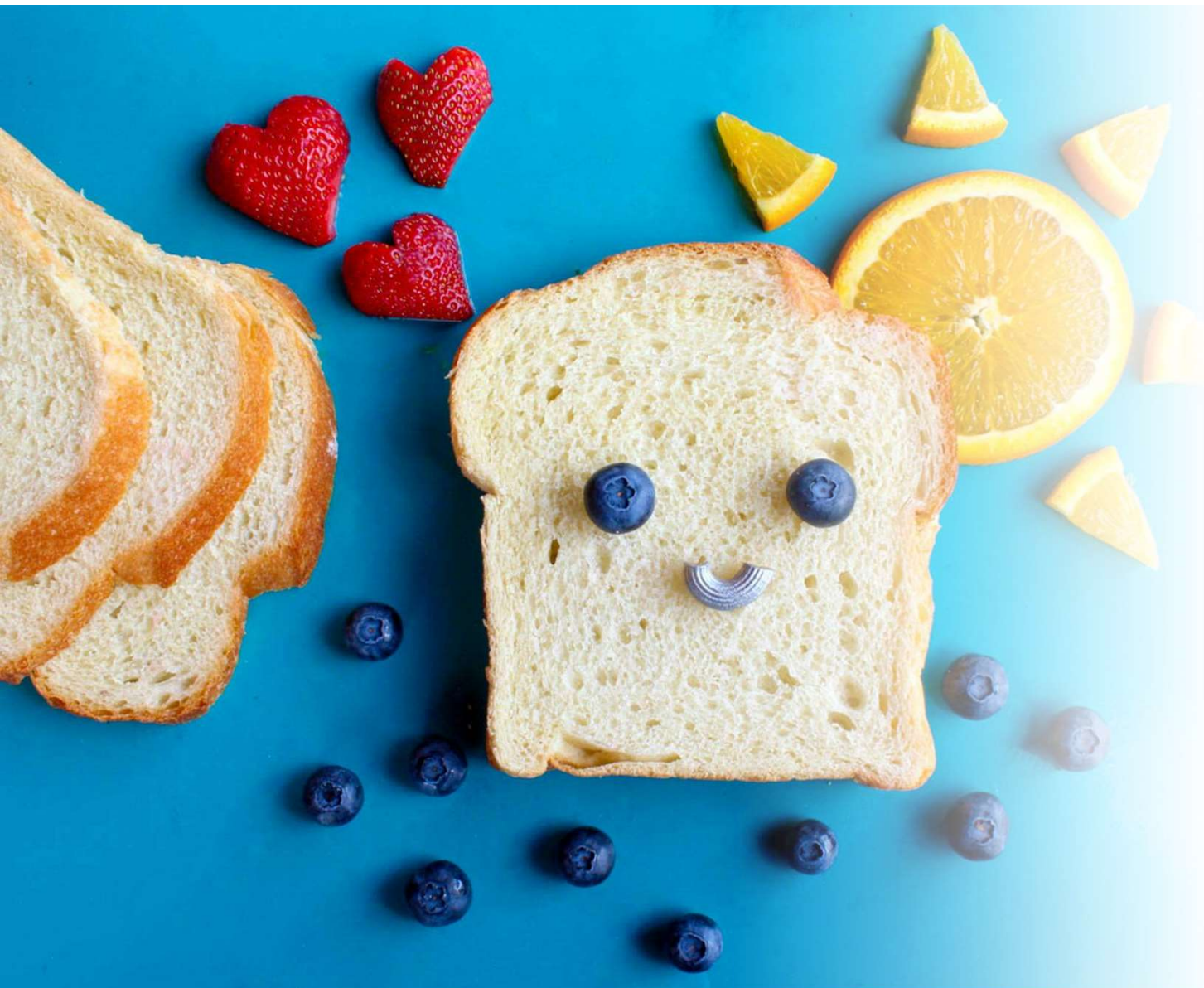




Sensory Feeding Difficulties



Picky eating

Picky eating is a common and normal behavior, starting between ages 2 and 3.

More than picky eating

For some children, feeding difficulties and selective eating are not a phase but symptoms of differences like:

- sensory processing differences,
- ADHD,
- autism,
- and/or, at the extreme end, Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID).

Physiological reasons should also be considered for example reflux, bowel difficulties or food intolerances.



Sensory Modulation

Sometimes sensory systems can be:

under-responsive (causing us to **seek** or **not notice** sensory input)

or

over-responsive (causing us to **avoid** or be **'fussy about'** sensory input)

SENSORY SEEKING

I could bounce on a trampoline & spin in circles on the tyre swing all day long
I like to smell things
I love to play with the lights and turn them on and off
I enjoy making lots of noise - the louder the better
I don't notice if my clothing is disheveled or not on right
Tackle me, roll on the floor with me, give me bear hugs
I love taking risks, jumping from high up and crashing into things
I love having my hair brushed or played with
I chew on everything in sight. I love crunchy foods
I love being tickled and massaged
I hate wearing shoes



SENSORY SENSITIVE

I am scared of trampolines, monkey bars or to swing high
I dislike having my hair brushed
I hate certain food textures so I'm a picky eater
I close my eyes in bright lights
I cover my ears to loud noise
I'm very sensitive to smells
I don't like being tickled
I take out the tags in my clothes and there's some fabrics I won't wear
Don't touch me
I'm really cautious with every step I take
I hate being barefoot



How his impacts on mealtimes

When the child is **sensory seeking**



Taste:

Craves stronger flavours.

Disinterested in bland foods.

Poor taste discrimination
may lick or taste non-food items



Smell:

Unaware of environmental odours.

May like to seek out different smells



Visual:

May not notice the visual features of food.

Visual sensory seeking can be a distraction from mealtimes.



Touch:

Unaware of different food textures.

May cram or overfill mouth as they cannot sense a small amount of food in the mouth.

May seek crunchy or chewy foods

May prefer very warm/ cold foods

May lick / bite/ eat non-food items

Unaware of messy hands/ face.

Auditory:

Unaware of the sounds in the mealtime environment

May appear day dreamy or make sounds to themselves.

CRUNCHY

- Veggie sticks
- Nut butter + apple slices
- Carrot sticks
- Nuts
- Snap peas
- Popcorn



COLD

- Cold salads
- Frozen yogurt
- Frozen grapes
- Smoothie popsicle



CHEWY

- Fruit leather
- Chewy granola bar
- Dried fruit
- Dates
- Jerky



FLAVORFUL

- Wasabi peas
- Pickles
- Spicy roasted chickpeas
- Lemons
- Hot peppers



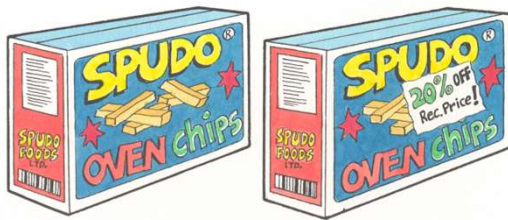
How his impacts on mealtimes

When the child is **sensory avoidant**

Taste:

May avoid stronger flavours, too sweet/ sour

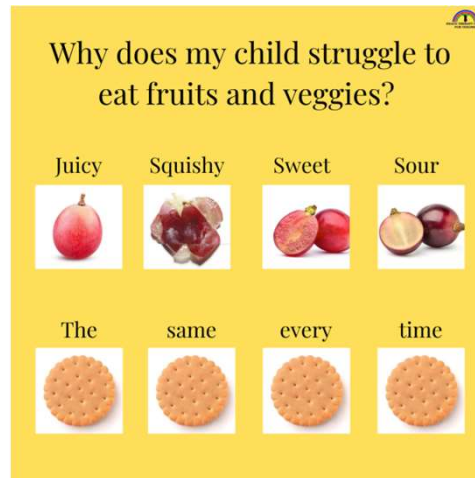
Prefers bland foods.



Visual: :

May be overly sensitive to the lights and movements within the environment.

May become upset by small changes to food appearance i.e. changes to packaging/ fruit with bruises/ broken biscuits.



Touch:

Overly sensitive to feeling around and in mouth. May avoid certain textures, for example dislike lumps, too much juice, too squishy etc. Resulting in food refusals

Dislikes mess around mouth

Takes food off fork with teeth, lips retracted.



Auditory:

The background noise may become uncomfortable and cause distress or distraction.



Smell:

Overly sensitive to smell that others do not notice

...

SWEET

- Fresh fruit
- Dried fruit
- Fig bar
- Oatmeal + honey
- Homemade energy bars
- Pancakes



SMOOTH

- Hummus + pita
- Smoothie bowls
- Yogurt
- Avocado
- Applesauce
- Pureed soups



Sensory Sensitive Foods

WARM

- Soups
- Warm oatmeal
- Warm pasta dishes
- Tea/coffee/hot chocolate
- Chilis or stews
- Stir fry



CREAMY

- Nut butters
- Hummus
- Guacamole
- Chia pudding
- Cottage cheese
- Mashed potatoes
- Greek yogurt



Look for food patterns:

•**Preferred foods:** these are foods that your child will eat most of the time (50% or more) when presented with the foods. It's OK if they sometimes don't want those foods, but if they usually eat them, put the food in this column.

•**Sometimes eats:** these are foods that your child will eat less than half of the time when presented with the foods.

•**Used to eat:** these are foods that your child used to eat at some point in his or her life, but refuses to eat them now.

•**Never eats:** these are foods that your child has never eaten. Either they refuse to try them altogether, or they spit them out after trying the food

high chair chronicles
our picky eating journey

PICKY EATER FOOD WORKSHEET

Preferred Foods (Eats more than half of the time)	Sometimes Eats (Eats less than half of the time)	Used to Eat	Never Eats
rice	deli ham	avocado	bread
pasta	salmon	crackers	pancakes
french fries	shrimp	grits	muffins
deli turkey	chicken nuggets	yogurt	cake
roasted potatoes	baby food	pureed veg soup	bananas
mango	blueberries	totillas	kiwi
grapes	cherry tomatoes	roasted beets	cookies
cheerios	strawberries		sweet potatoes
cucumber	fruit snacks		peas
watermelon	gold fish		steamed veg
corn	chicken breast		roasted veg
	roasted cauliflower		oatmeal
	papaya		cream of wheat
	cantaloupe		waffles
	potato chips		carrots
			butternut squash
			quinoa
			beans/chickpeas
			lentils
			couscous

Introduce new foods

Start with similar foods
to the ones your child
tolerates

Concentrate on one
new food at a time

Trying portions

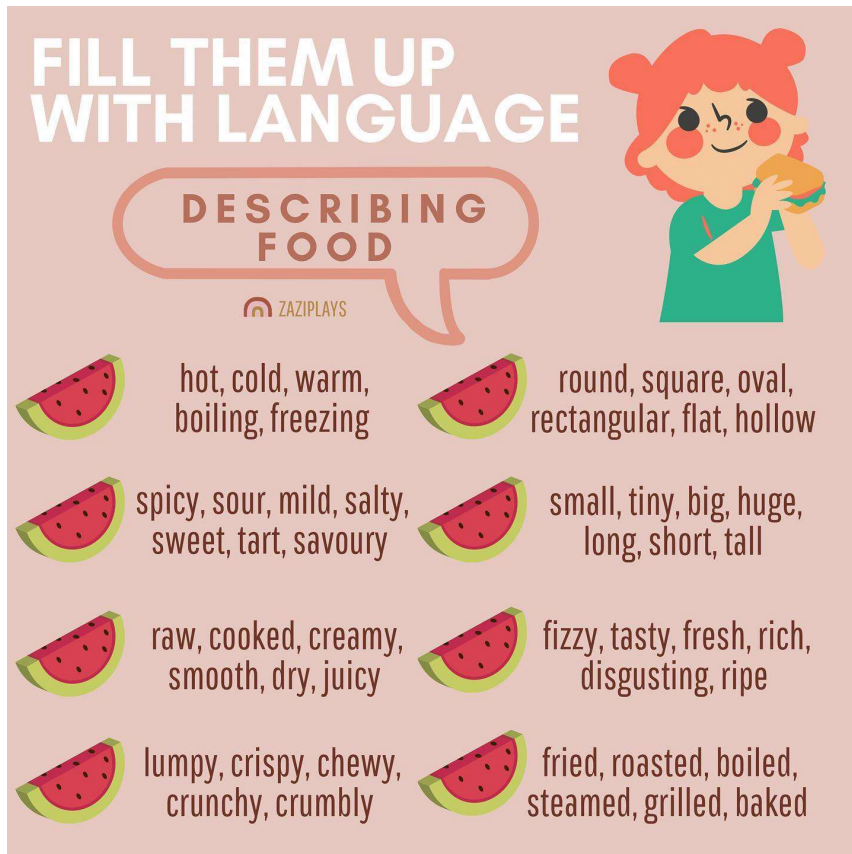
2 weeks exposure
before moving on

Do not try to trick or
surprise your child





Encourage them to communicate their preferences and respect them!



“I especially hate any foods with bits in it, or things mixed together with each other”

“I don’t like to eat any food which is the wrong texture, too slimy, too squishy, too soft.”

“Crackers are my favourite food. I like the way they look, and taste, and the colour, smell and texture of them”