



*Mixed texture foods can be hard to motor plan, chew and to process from a sensory point of view.*

### **Strategies to try at home**

- It's important to continue offering a variety of family foods
- For children to accept a range of foods they need to play and learn about new foods first
- Prepare your child for a meal by having a pre-mealtime routine
- Serve food from the middle of the table to avoid the sensory bombardment of a full plate
- Limit grazing so that children can learn to be full and empty. Always assure them of the next food opportunity to avoid anxiety.

## **About the Parenting Picky Eaters Group**

**Simone Emery** is based in Australia and runs **Play with Food**. Whilst **Jo Cormack** is in the UK and runs **Emotionally Aware Feeding**. Both feeding specialists jointly run the The Parenting Picky Eaters group on Facebook. And their websites include a range of articles based on their feeding therapy experience and evidence based information. Jo and Simone offer online resources and consults for concerned parents.

### **Join the group ....**

Search "Parenting Picky Eaters" we have over 1000 members!

### **Play with Food**

Email: [Simone@playwithfood.com.au](mailto:Simone@playwithfood.com.au)

Web: <https://www.playwithfood.com.au>

### **Emotionally Aware Feeding**

Email: [jo@emotionallyawarefeeding.com](mailto:jo@emotionallyawarefeeding.com)

Web: <http://emotionallyawarefeeding.com>



## **Understanding a Child's Picky Eating Behaviour**

# **PARENTING PICKY EATERS**

*Happily Feeding Your Family  
... Especially with Picky Kids*



*Is it cold or is it hot? Learning about food involves all our senses, all our organs and a multitude of muscles & nerves. And then all of those systems need to work correctly.*

## Is it just a phase?

**It is estimated that 4 – 10 % of the child population are problem feeders. This is beyond developmental fussiness that is often considered a phase**

Red flags for problems with feeding (*ref: Dr Kay Toomey, 2010*) include:

- Ongoing poor weight gain / loss
- Ongoing choking, gagging or coughing during meals
- Ongoing problems with vomiting
- More than one instance of nasal reflux
- History of traumatic choking incident
- Unable to transition to puree by 10 months
- Unable to accept table foods by 12 months

- Inability to transition to a cup by 16 months of age
- Unable to wean off baby foods by 16 months
- Aversion or avoidance of all foods in a certain food group / texture
- Food range of <20 foods, especially if they are being dropped over time with no new foods entering.
- An infant that cries or arches at most meals.
- The family is fighting about food and feeding
- Parent reports the child is fussy for more than 2 health checks
- Parent reports the child is difficult for everyone to feed
- Parental history of eating disorder, with child not meeting weight goals (parent is not cause, but they may be more stressed)

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*“The biggest thing I got from Simone was the feeling of guilt I carried around as a mum was lifted, now I can see my kids aren’t just being picky eaters, and I am not failing. Each small step is a victory.”* - Natalie

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*Dietary repertoire can be expanded by offering a variety of learning opportunities about foods. Variety is key.*

### Root Causes

Feeding problems can start due to medical conditions; pain associated with eating; discomfort during feeding; immature motor, oral-motor or swallow skills; sensory processing problems; impaired learning capacity / cognitive delays; and/or nutritional deficiencies.

It is important for parents not to blame themselves, set goals and work out a plan to help their child by identifying root causes and strategies to assist. It’s sometimes not enough to assume “they will just grow out of it.” Eating is complex.

### Play Based Approach

To play with food, means you learn about the food. Embracing the mess of feeding children is part of embracing their learning.