



Get more information about selective eating and tips for trying new foods at the link below.

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<https://childmind.org/article/autism-and-picky-eating/>.

## Selective Eating or Food Selectivity

**Food selectivity** is when a person limits the variety of foods that they are willing to eat, usually without any specific rationale. Persons who are food selective are often less motivated by hunger and are more likely to refuse many food options. **Selective eating** and **food selectivity** can lead to health and behavioral challenges.

Children with intellectual or developmental disabilities often present with rigid or restrictive behaviors and thoughts. **Food selectivity** may be an indication of their restrictive/rigid nature. Sensory processing differences may also be a cause of food selectivity. Examples include texture, temperature, smell or taste (bitter, sweet, spicy).

Behavioral concerns may arise when addressing a child's selective eating habits. This may include complete food refusal, avoidance of meal times, and meltdowns or tantrums. The tips below will help to introduce new foods, expand the palate, and keep behavior challenges to a minimum.

Talk to your doctor if you suspect an underlying medical condition impacting your child's eating habits or a medical concern as a result of food selectivity.

## Tips for Trying New Foods

- Small and Specific
  - Select one food that you want your child to eat (ex: carrots)
  - Select a food that aligns with preferences (ex: raw carrots if preferring crunchy foods)
  - Give a very small taste or portion (start with the size of a pea)
- Repeated and Gradual Exposure
  - Continue with the same food and same amount until goal is attained
  - Increase amount of new food gradually (from pea-size to dime-size)
- Clear and Concrete Expectations
  - How long do you expect your child to sit at the table to eat the new food?
  - What happens if the child does or does not eat the new food?
- Positive Praise and Reinforcement
  - Give extensive positive praise for their efforts no matter how small
  - Set up a reward system for trying new foods (ex: sticker chart)

## Managing Meltdowns

- Progress will be slow. Parents are likely to get some resistance at first. Stick with the plan and be patient.
- Do not give attention to negative behaviors including a food-related meltdown. Provide a clear and concrete directive and stick to it. (Ex: "When you eat your bite of carrot you will earn a sticker.")
- Whether or not the child eats the new food, find something positive and praise them for it. (Ex: "You did a good job eating your chicken with a carrot on your plate.")



Happy Thanksgiving  
from  
Parent Network!



## Upcoming Events

| Date/Time           | Topic                                             | Link                                                                                                                |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday, 12/1 @ 6pm | Holiday Stress                                    | <a href="https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/holiday-stress/">https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/holiday-stress/</a> |
| Monday, 12/7 @ 10am | Meaningful Communication with Your Child's School | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/y3k5w7ne">https://tinyurl.com/y3k5w7ne</a>                                             |



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