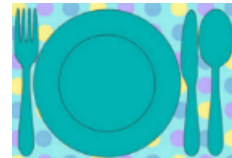


Surrey County Council Dysphagia Service

Sensory and Behavioural Advice Sheet

Routines:

- We should aim to eat 3 meals a day with 2-3 snack times in between.
- Water based drinks can be given at any time unless advised otherwise.
- Children who are restrictive eaters may be more likely to 'graze'
- We need gaps in between eating to feel hungry and to support our overall health and well-being
- Children who don't feel hungry might be more encouraged to eat as part of daily routines
- Start by setting consistent times for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.
- Avoid offering food in between the set meal or snack times.
- Drinks such as milk / smoothies count as a food, so should be given during meal or snack times.



Seating:

- Back, thighs and FEET should be supported with hips, knees, and ankles at 90°
- Support feet using specialist high-chairs or stools/boxes
- Consider most supportive position if no chair/table at home
- Use new crockery/placemats/cutlery to create a 'new' environment for eating and reset expectations
- Consider using a timer to help child to sit for longer periods – build up to entire mealtime



Family Style Serving:

- The food everyone is eating is available in the middle of the table (think buffet).
- Everybody serves themselves, or can ask for the food they want
- There should be food available everyone will eat
- It is important that your child can be in the same room as the food
- Have some of the food your child likes
- There is no pressure to eat the food on your plate – it can be a real success for your child to have the food on their plate!
- Pressure/stress = adrenaline = appetite suppression and negative associations



Social modelling:

1. Family/shared mealtimes are the ideal setting to provide positive models for eating
2. Families should eat together
3. You play a really important role in modelling positive behaviours and language at mealtimes.
4. Encourage them to feed themselves wherever possible



Top tips:

- Put your phones away
- Minimise distractions (e.g. turn TV off)
- Consider gradual reduction of mealtime props.

Rewards and Bribes:

We recommend **avoiding** the following;

- Reward systems
- Using preferred foods as a reward for trying non-preferred foods



Try these tips;

- Having 'pudding' offered at same time
- Make a list of foods your child eats or has tried

The learning plate:

- You may wish to use a 'learning' plate if your child cannot tolerate unwanted or new foods on their plate
- This should be placed near to their normal plate for snack and mealtimes.
- They can place anything on this plate that they want to look at or explore further.

Fun experiences with food:

- These are activities you and your child can do away from mealtimes
- These activities should be fun and pressure free. There should be no pressure to eat/ taste / touch food
- Repeat these fun experiences with food activities as much as possible
- These activities will help your child move through the steps to eating at their own pace.

Final Thoughts:

- Patience is key – it can take a long time to learn new habits and break down fears around food and eating
- It can be bumpy journey with periods of no change in between progress
- The SLT can help with children who have specific difficulties with chewing and swallowing

Resources:

Sensory play toolkit for avoidant fussy or picky eaters – suitable for younger children

<file:///C:/Users/cneill/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/JEAQKIG3/Sensory%20play%20toolkit%20for%20avoidant%20fussy%20or%20picky%20eaters%20aged%202-7.pdf>

Resistant Eaters, Therapy Focus – suitable for younger and older children

<file:///C:/Users/cneill/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/JEAQKIG3/130212-resistant-eaters-booklet-fact-sheets.pdf>

Useful literature:

- Can't Eat Won't Eat by Brenda Legge.
- What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Dawn Huebner and Bonnie Matthews.
- Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide Using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques by Cathy Cresswell and Lucy Willetts.
- Food Refusal and Avoidant Eating in Children by Gillian Harris and Elizabeth O'Shea.
- ARFID – Avoidant Restricted Food Intake Disorder, a Guide for Parents by Rachel Bryant-Waugh.

Occupation Therapy (OT):

If you have concerns or need more support with sensory difficulties, contact OT Helpline:

Offers practical occupational therapy advice, strategies and support to schools, parents/carers and other professionals in relation to a child's/young person's functional and independence skills

Occupational Therapy Helpline: open Tuesdays and Thursdays 2pm - 4pm.

Tel: [01932 558570](tel:01932558570)

Onward Referrals:

If you have concerns about weight or nutritional intake, please seek a Dietetics referral from your GP

Occupational Therapy

Specialist clinics if necessary