

How to talk to your doctor about your child's "picky eating"

If you have a child who doesn't eat many foods, you may feel:

- **worried** that they are not getting enough food and nutrients they need
- **frustrated** with not knowing how to help your child learn to try more foods

It is important to talk to your child's doctor if you are worried about your child's eating. Knowing what to say to your child's doctor can be challenging. This resource can help you discuss your concerns with them. Feel free to bring this resource to your appointment and share it with your child's doctor.



Why are you worried about your child's eating?

Parents often describe that their child is a "picky eater", however picky eating can mean different things to different people. It is important to identify specifically what about your child's eating you are worried about.

Use the checklist below to help identify your concerns about your child's eating.

Volume

- ☐ Missing meals
- ☐ Not eating enough to gain weight
- ☐ Not drinking enough

Variety

- ☐ Missing a food group (e.g., not eating any vegetables)
- ☐ Eating less than 10 foods
- ☐ Afraid/refuse to try new foods
- ☐ Limits specific textures (e.g., crunchy, purees)

What factors affect your child's eating?

There are different factors that can contribute to your child's eating challenges. The checklist below has been adapted from the **MOBSe approach** to feeding challenges. Use this checklist to share what you think may be impacting your child's eating with their doctor, so they can help address them.

Medical/Nutrition factors may include:

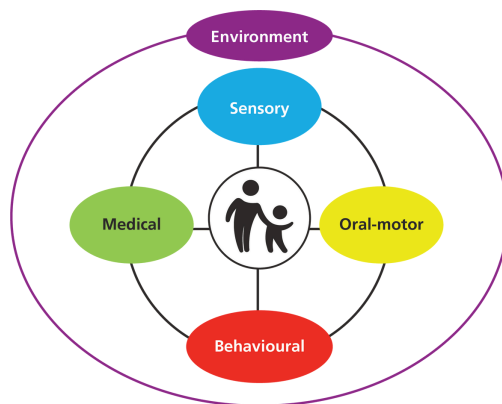
- ☐ constipation
- ☐ reflux/vomiting
- ☐ dental issues
- ☐ growth concerns (e.g., slow weight gain)
- ☐ nutritional deficiencies or excess intake

Oral-motor factors may include:

- ☐ gagging/choking
- ☐ problems with swallowing
- ☐ difficulty chewing
- ☐ difficulty transitioning from blended/mashed foods to solids

Behavioural factors may include:

- ☐ interfering behaviour at mealtimes (e.g., tantrums, throwing food, refusing to come to the table)
- ☐ inflexibility with food preferences and/or mealtime routines



Sensory factors may include:

- ☐ not appearing to feel hungry
- ☐ being bothered by the look, smell, or sounds of food/chewing
- ☐ avoiding foods of certain textures/colours
- ☐ sensitivity to small changes in food/drink

Environmental factors may include:

- ☐ needing distractions while eating
- ☐ difficulty sitting for meals
- ☐ challenges eating in different environments
- ☐ difficulty maintaining a mealtime routine

Parent-child relationship factors may include:

- ☐ the dynamic of the relationship you have with your child, especially at meal times, as a parent and child are very closely connected

Conceptualized by Smile, S., Raffaele, C., Perlin, R. v2.

What does your child eat in a day?

It is helpful to track your child's food and liquid intake for a few days before your appointment. This will help the doctor understand what your child is eating and drinking on a daily basis. You can use the food record below to help. The first line is an example of how you can record your child's food intake.

Time of Day	Type of Food	Amount
Breakfast (7am)	Strawberry yogurt Dry Corn Flakes cereal 2% milk	½ cup 1 cup ¾ cup

Other foods my child is currently eating:

Do you have any additional concerns?

You may have other questions for your doctor. For example:

- Does my child need a blood test to check on their nutrition?
- Does my child need any specific vitamins?
- Are there any long-term effects of my child's "picky eating"?
- I have tried multiple things to help my child try different foods, but it has not worked. Do you have any other suggestions?
- I am feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and frustrated with my child's "picky eating." What can I do?
- Who can help my family address my child's "picky eating"?
- Are there any resources that you could share with me?



Note any other questions you may have here:



This handout is part of the NDD Restrictive Eating Clinic Information Series:
www.hollandbloorview.ca/RestrictiveEatingInfo