



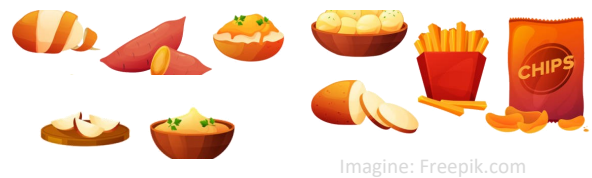
Will not accept foods touching or mixed on a plate



Imagine: Freepik.com

Restricted diet

Three cartoon children are shown against colored backgrounds. On the left, a boy with red hair and a light blue shirt holds a red apple. In the middle, a girl with brown hair in a ponytail, wearing a white shirt and a pink polka-dot skirt, holds a carrot. On the right, a boy with dark hair and a black shirt holds a green kiwi. The text 'Imagine: Freepik.com' is at the bottom.



Over-stuffing or pouching

bite	chew	swallow
		

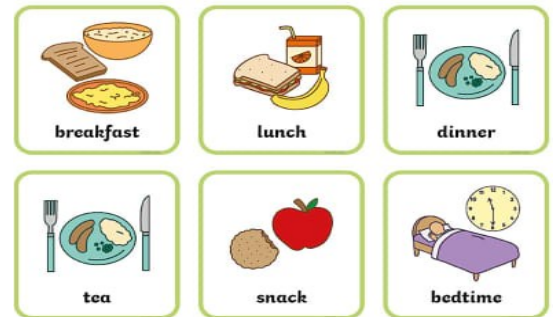
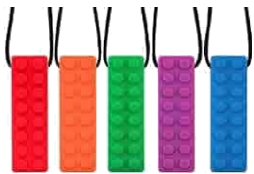
SNAP Charity ● Helpline: 01277 211300 ● The SNAP Centre, Pastoral Way, Warley, Brentwood, Essex CM14 5WF ● Registered Charity No. 1077787



Eating With Sensory Sensitivities or Co-ordination Difficulties

Compulsive chewing

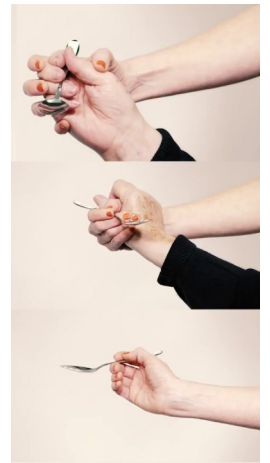
Chewing provides lots of sensory input during the day. Try using items for chewing such as Chewy Tubes or Chewelry that are designed for this. A sports bottle for drinking requires strong sucking and will also provide similar sensory input. Use a visual timetable to show times for eating.



Difficulty using cutlery

Strong motivation is needed to use cutlery as fingers can be quicker and easier.

If co-ordination is a problem, using larger handled or heavier cutlery may be easier. The weight gives more 'pull' to enhance movement sensors. Assist hand-over-hand to help reinforce the correct movement. Use a shaped plate to stop food falling off and a silicone mat to stop the plate moving.



Seating arrangements

Make sure their feet can rest firmly on the floor or a step. This will help to ground them and enable them to balance their upper body more efficiently. It will also allow them to chew and swallow their food properly and safely. It may also help if you eat altogether as a family and minimise distractions, or conversely allow them to eat to one side if they are affected by the noise of other people eating.



Imagine: Freepik.com



Eating With Sensory Sensitivities or Co-ordination Difficulties

The following could be supported by the use of Social Stories:

Difficulties accepting a change of packaging or look of a food product

It is better to be honest and warn them in **advance** that it is different; in order to retain trust. Use visual supports or a Social Story to discuss the change.



Difficulty staying at the table and table manners

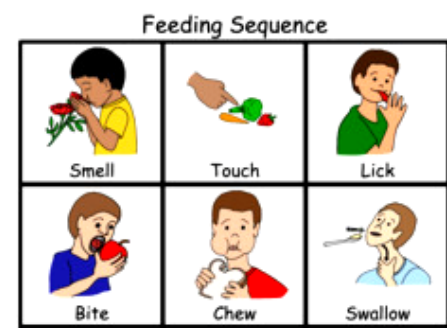
Try to build up time at the table from a very short time; and reward this. Rethink reasonable times and rules for mealtimes. Have clear social rules about eating out and eating at home. A Social Story or visual prompts can help a child to understand what is expected at the table, and practising through play can also reinforce this.

Refusing foods at mealtimes

Try limiting snacks between meals and keep mealtimes regular. Use a visual timetable to show what will happen **after** mealtimes and reward the child with a favoured activity. Consider how much fluid your child is drinking as this can affect their appetite. Try smelling, touching, licking as a gradual process building up to tasting.



Imagine: Freepik.com



Anxiety around mealtimes

They may feel anxiety around mealtimes. Try to relax the pressure as this can lead to negative associations with food. Encourage positive behaviour and praise good choices at mealtimes. Keep your own worry and desperation in check and try to make your responses to their progress and failure as calm and low key as possible.

The contacts and links given via this SNAP information sheet have been shared as a starting point for your own research. We believe the information to be genuine and correct at the time of publishing, however no responsibility for loss occasioned by any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of the material contained herein can be accepted by SNAP.

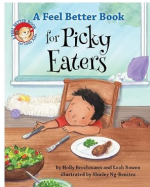


Eating With Sensory Sensitivities or Co-ordination Difficulties

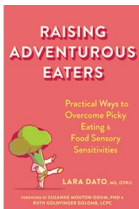
Useful Resources



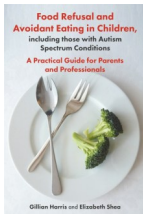
Strategies for a Successful Mealtime - Maureen Flanagan



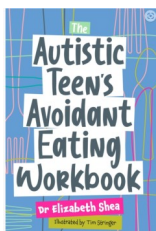
A Feel Better Book for Picky Eaters - Holly Brochmann



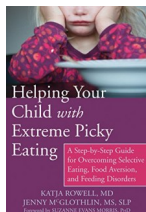
Raising Adventurous Eaters - Practical Ways to Overcome Picky Eating and Food Sensory Sensitivities - Lara Dato



Food Refusal and Avoidant Eating in Children including those with Autism Spectrum Conditions - Gillian Harris and Elizabeth Shea



Autistic Teen's Avoidant Eating Workbook - Dr Elizabeth Shea



Helping Your Child with Extreme Picky Eating - Katya Rowell

Sensory issues and feeding: <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/download.cfm?doc=docm93ijm4n14061.pdf&ver=20202>

Autism Spectrum Disorders and Eating Difficulties: https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ASD_and_Eating_Difficulties.pdf

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Eating With Sensory Sensitivities or Co-ordination Difficulties

Please scan QR code or click on the link to access this and our other information sheets

[Downloadable Survival Guides, Information and Resources from SNAP](#)



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