For children over 12 months of age, it is recommended that you offer food every 2-3 hours, for example – three meals a day and small snacks in between.

Children should be hungry at mealtimes – it is important not to fill up on drinks or snack foods.

Eat as a family
Serve the same food as the rest of the family (you may need to adapt meals slightly, such as less spice or salt)
Model eating and enjoying a variety of healthy foods
Talk positively about healthy foods (for example, ‘yummy crunchy carrots’)

Praise your child for trying
Talk calmly and use positive language

Resist force-feeding
Allow your child to decide how much of the meal to eat. Avoid offering alternatives for uneaten meals

Non-food based rewards include praise, extra play time, stickers and reward charts
Do not reward with food (for example, avoid saying ‘eat your vegetables and you will get dessert’)

Enjoy mealtimes

Create a mealtime routine

Allow your child to respond to their own hunger cues

Be a positive role model

Use non-food based rewards

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Do not reward with food (for example, avoid saying ‘eat your vegetables and you will get dessert’)
Involve children in cooking, food play, gardening, menu planning, grocery shopping

Encourage exploration - smell, touch and taste foods

Let children feed themselves - mess is okay

It can take 10-15 times for a child to accept a new food - don’t give up!

When providing new foods, serve alongside a food they like - you may need to separate foods so they are not touching

Introduce one new food at a time

Try cooking or preparing using different methods (for example, raw vs. steamed vs. baked vegetables)

Do not overwhelm with a big plate of food

Provide small portions and give children the opportunity to have more

Make food fun and interesting - make shapes or characters, be colourful, use special cups and plates, cookie cutters and drinking straws

Avoid distraction

Keep trying

Offer child-size portions

Present food creatively

Involve children

Fussy eating is a challenge for many parents - you are not alone! Be patient and keep trying