

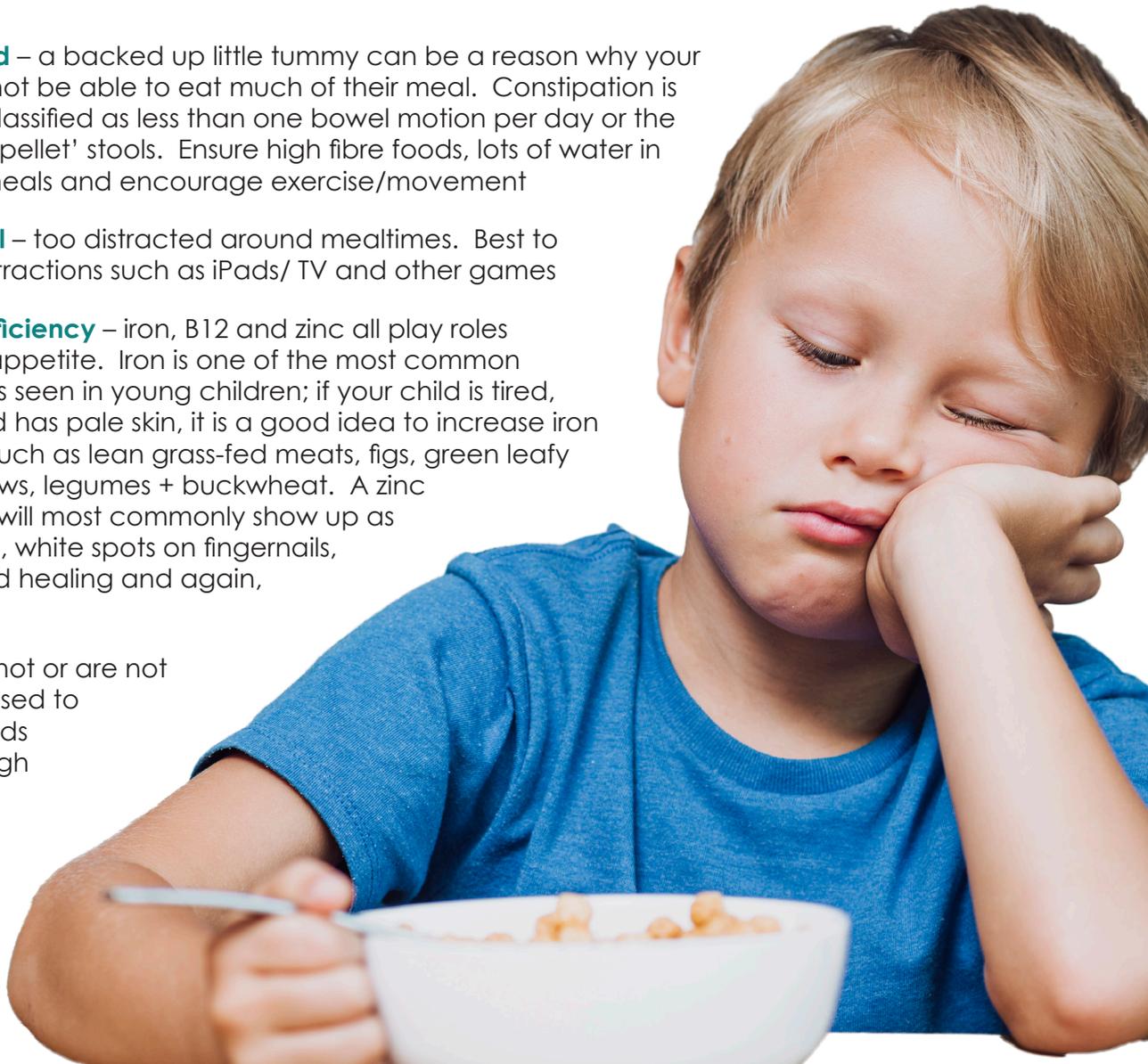
CREATING HEALTHY EATING HABITS + THE FUSSY EATER

It is very important to raise healthy kids and teach them young about healthy food, living and attitudes. This will set them up for a bright, happy, healthy future. We all want to raise healthy kids, keep them healthy and have them set great examples for the future. It is an old cliché, but healthy kids are happy kids. Below are some tips for raising healthy kids and getting them to eat well + develop a love of healthy whole food.

Inconsistent eating habits in young children is common but can be managed. Your child may be a 'picky eater' or a 'fussy eater'. One week they are eating the broccoli and the next they won't even look at it. Either way, it is normal and their way of showing independence. But the good news is there are loads of things to do to combat this.

Common reasons for fussy eating children

- **Eating close to mealtimes** – such as snacks, milk or soft drinks – remember children have little tummies and can get full quickly. Most of their nutrition should be in their main meal
- **Constipated** – a backed up little tummy can be a reason why your child may not be able to eat much of their meal. Constipation is generally classified as less than one bowel motion per day or the passing of 'pellet' stools. Ensure high fibre foods, lots of water in between meals and encourage exercise/movement
- **Behavioural** – too distracted around mealtimes. Best to remove distractions such as iPads/ TV and other games
- **Nutrient deficiency** – iron, B12 and zinc all play roles in healthy appetite. Iron is one of the most common deficiencies seen in young children; if your child is tired, irritable and has pale skin, it is a good idea to increase iron rich foods such as lean grass-fed meats, figs, green leafy veg, cashews, legumes + buckwheat. A zinc deficiency will most commonly show up as loss of taste, white spots on fingernails, poor wound healing and again, irritability
- They have not or are not being exposed to healthy foods often enough



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TOP TIPS for combating the Fussy Eater

- 1. Start early** – instilling healthy eating habits from an early age plays such an important role in getting children to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods.
- 2. Don't make a big deal or yell, and don't rush mealtimes** – We have all been there, yelling at our kids to eat their vegetables or dinner. Life is busy and we all want our kids to eat well and love food. But by doing this, we only create a stigma around what we are trying to get them to do.
- 3. Try to avoid bribes** - This can be hard to do, but it is in a similar boat as making a big deal or a fuss about health eating. If food is always associated with something, be it yelling or if you eat this you will get a reward, it won't work in the future.
- 4. Involve your kids in the process from the beginning** - Take the kids shopping, to the farmer's markets or local growers. By understanding where real food comes from, there can be a greater appreciation and understanding of food in general
- 5. Eat as a family** - Research suggests that eating as a family can improve the eating habits of children. Sitting down as a family at mealtimes allows children to eat a variety of healthy food and model off their parents
- 6. Main meals are where we should be getting most of their nutrition** - A balanced meal can provide children with many of the nutrients they need. Try to avoid snacking or mindless eating. Where it permits; try to reduce snacking close to mealtimes.
- 7. Talk about healthy food + why it is important** - Once your kids are old enough, have a chat to them about the importance of healthy food choices.
- 8. Start small** – especially with little kids, you don't want to overwhelm them, then you can build on this weekly.
- 9. Be aware of naming and shaming 'bad' foods** - It can be easy tell kids that they can't eat that because it is 'bad'. Try instead to call it a 'sometimes' food and explain why.
- 10. Have fun!** - Get the kids in the kitchen, allow them to get a little messy and play with food!
- 11. Don't have unhealthy foods or 'treats' in the house** – make your own most of the time. This is a great way to help your kids make better choices. A simple and effective thing to do.
- 12. Don't give up** - Research suggests that it can take up to 15 attempts for a child to decide whether they are going to like that food.
- 13. Make it look appealing!** - Fun, bright and colourful food is always a winner. Use fun plates + cutlery, even shape cutters and design it in a way that looks interesting!
- 14. Don't forget props! Try spiralisers to make colourful noodles** – orange (carrots), green (zucchini) + purple (beetroot) – can be served raw or lightly steamed.

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