

Don't let your picky eater stress you out

TODDLER

ARTICLE

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Picky-eating may add stress to meal times for both parents and children. Reduce the stress by helping your children with their preferences and encouraging them to try new food and flavours.

Your child's eating preferences won't develop overnight, so give them time to build on this.

Mealtimes are stressful. There's crying (your child) and shouting (you) during every meal. Your child doesn't want to eat what you've spent hours planning, shopping for and cooking. They never try new foods or give up after one bite.

Does any of this sound familiar?

Parenting in itself can be stressful, so having the added worry of a child who's particular with food might push one over the edge. But this burden doesn't have to take over your life and add to your list of stresses. Here are some proven ways to reduce picky-eater stress.

- **Take time for yourself.** Taking yourself away from the situation – and, let's face it, your child too – may help calm yourself down when you're stressed. It may take just 10 minutes, but it may make or break your day. If you feel most stressed during mealtimes, take this me-time just before or after.
- **Don't try to do it all.** We all want to be Supermum/Superdad, but the reality is we're not all built for that. If your child's picky eating is zapping all your energy, let go of other things that don't need to be a priority at the moment. This gives you more time – literally and mentally – to deal with your picky eater, and you'll be less stressed as you do so.
- **Think long-term.** So your child isn't even looking at vegetables this week. And it's stressing you out to no end. Look at this eating journey as a long one; trust that, no matter how bad it looks now, it will get better. Your child's eating preferences won't develop overnight, so give them (and yourself) time to build on this.

- **Get some perspective.** Remember that what your child eats isn't the only important thing in their lives. They need other things to make them happy and feel fulfilled, so don't let your stress about their picky eating affect your relationship. Join them in activities they enjoy. This may help relieve your stress about mealtimes; these moments also serve as great bonding sessions.
- **Take a deep breath.** Your child's overall health and wellbeing are more important than whether or not they like broccoli. Sure, it may feel overwhelming at times, but don't let the frustration of mealtimes affect your mood or your relationship with your fussy eater. Shower your child occasionally with loving moments and show them you love them, instead of getting stressed about their picky eating.

Your partner in the parenthood journey

If wondering whether your child is getting enough nutrients is what's making you feel most stressed, supplementing their diet may help alleviate your worries.

S-26 Gold Ascenda milk formula contains 38 ingredients to provide complete, balanced nutrition for your child's growth – including high-quality protein (a-lactalbumin) which helps spur tissue building and growth; while zinc, iron, folic acid, and vitamins A, B12, C and D help enhance immunity.

