

When is

# “CHOOSY” EATING

A PROBLEM?

**Seek professional advice when choosy eating impacts a child's physical or mental health.**

**Eating problems are complex and generally require a team approach. Acting out at meal and snack times may be a child's coping strategy for sensory or oral-motor problems which are causing discomfort.**

Choosy eating is common and is often a sign that a child is becoming more independent. Choosy eaters typically become less picky over time, but some may require professional support in order to change their eating habits. Your observations of a child's eating behavior can help identify the extent of the problem.

## When to Be Concerned

- The number and types of foods a child eats decreases over time.
- The food that a child eats does not provide adequate nutrition.
- A child refuses an increasing number of foods that are offered.
- A child develops ritualistic eating behavior, such as demanding to only eat a certain brand of crackers.
- A child gags, spits up, or vomits food.
- A child refuses to feed himself.
- A child's limited diet gets in the way of their ability to eat with others.
- Mealtimes revolve around the child's eating problems. For example, the child has tantrums or his meal lasts longer than 40 minutes.
- The child has significant weight gain or loss.

Consider asking a professional such as an Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Pathologist or Behavioral Psychologist to observe the child at mealtimes. These professionals can determine when an eating behavior requires further attention.

Kennedy Krieger Institute. Picky Eating, Just a Phase or Something More Serious? [www.kennedykrieger.org/overview/news/picky-eating-just-phase-or-something-more-serious](http://www.kennedykrieger.org/overview/news/picky-eating-just-phase-or-something-more-serious). August 31, 2009. Accessed June 15, 2016.



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