

## TODDLERS WHO WON'T EAT VEGETABLES

Your baby has probably eaten a lot of vegetables by the time they get to around two years old, and the sudden refusal to eat them comes as somewhat a shock to most mothers.

There are a number of reasons why the sudden refusal to eat certain foods occurs.

One of the big reasons is that about this age the child suddenly discovers the immense power of the word NO! A small child is always testing the reactions of those close to them and boundaries within which they operate. It can become very frustrating for a mother to find that the child who has been such a good eater now suddenly refuses just about everything offered.

It is really important for the mother not to become upset about this, and although she invariably is, not to show it. Meal times must never become battle grounds.

If the child refuses to eat what is offered calmly take the food away, but never then offer something that could be classified as a treat. Remember, no child voluntarily starves itself to death even though their mother may fear that is what is going to happen. Try not to suggest dire consequences of not eating, such as if you don't eat you will get sick or die. The idea is to bring up your child with no unhealthy ideas around food. Good food is something yummy to eat and a normal and unremarkable part of the day's events. If the mother becomes upset and tries to force the child to eat, then a very fraught adversarial atmosphere surrounds mealtimes and it becomes a dreadful experience for all concerned.

All little children like to eat what their mother and father is eating, so it can be a good idea to let your toddler try something from your plate if they show interest in it. Don't offer it to them, wait until they try to take some, or ask for some.

Create interest in food by teaching your little one the names of fruits and vegetables and when you are shopping, if they are old enough, allow them to choose an apple, tomato, cucumber, banana or other easily handled fruit and vegetable. This can be put in a special pile so they know this is their food. Creating ownership of foods goes a long way to helping the child want to eat it.

When you are cooking let your little one choose a couple of items to be cooked, e.g. which potato shall we have.

Making food in to fun can help as well. A simple salad can be a smiley face with cucumber slices for eyes, a piece of carrot for a nose and two cherry tomatoes for rosy cheeks, with the mouth a wedge of watermelon or a slice of meat, and alfalfa sprouts for hair.

Gardens are fun as well. Make a flower with a piece of celery for a stem, cucumber slice for the centre, wedges of tomato for petals. The sun can be a circle of carrot with some carrot strips for rays. The ground can be some meat, or clouds can be cottage cheese.

A calm approach and the sure knowledge that this phase will pass and your healthy little eater will return will get you through.