

# Frequently asked questions

**Q:** My son eats hardly anything but thankfully drinks plenty of milk.

**A:** Milk is a food and very filling. If your child is drinking a lot of milk — more than 600ml a day for a 1–3 year old and 750ml for a 4–11 year old — then he is having too much. He does not eat properly because he is too full. Offer water to drink at main mealtimes and a small glass of milk between meals.

**Q:** My two year old daughter will only eat jam sandwiches. I am upset by the amount of food wasted and she won't try anything new.

**A:** Your daughter is at an age when she is starting to be more independent and saying 'no' to food is a normal part of this. Sometimes children use 'no' as a way of having some control over what is happening around them. Remember that if a child is hungry, she will eat. A healthy child will not starve because of food refusal.

Food wastage can be worrying for parents for several reasons: food costs money, parents may be concerned their child is not eating enough and meals take time and effort to prepare.

Suggestions include:

- Be comfortable with the effort you put into preparing foods. Offer a variety of small portions on their plate. You are less likely to worry if a couple of banana slices hit the floor rather than the whole fruit.
- If your child is older and knows better, decide on consequences for deliberate wastage of food, such as taking away their plate.

**Q:** Is it OK for my child to go to bed hungry?

**A:** The fussy eater, having decided against the meal you have prepared, has chosen to go without food until the next meal. Refusing the meal contains the natural consequence of becoming hungry, and becoming hungry will make the next meal more appetising. Healthy children do not starve themselves, nor will a short period of hunger do them any harm. If he or she will not eat the food that is offered, then you can respond with 'the next mealtime will be... (for example, breakfast tomorrow)'.

**Q:** Is it OK to use a dessert as a reward?

**A:** Using dessert or other sweet snacks as a reward sends a message to children that eating the healthy food choices at dinner is such hard work that they need to be rewarded for eating them. This results in healthy foods being seen as more unpleasant, while sweet foods (because they are used as rewards) become even more attractive.



## Where can I get help if I need it?

- **Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)** Free parenting program that promotes good communication between parents and children. The program looks at the causes of child behavioural problems and how to encourage desirable behaviour in children.  
**Contact:** Contact your local Child, Youth and Family Health Services
- **Parentline** Confidential telephone counselling service for parents/carers. Trained Triple P counsellors. Seven days a week service — 8am–10pm  
**Contact:** 1300 30 1300
- **Child, Youth and Family Health Services** Free professional services for families with children 0–18 years.  
**Contact:** 1800 177 279
- **Community Health**  
**Contact:** Contact your local Child, Youth and Family Health Services
- **Referral to:** Dietitian, Speech/Language Pathologist, Psychologist or Paediatrician via family GP for public hospital services or private services available via telephone directory

## For more information

- *Eat Right, Don't Fight*  
by Jan O'Connell, Rosey Cummings and Gina Ralston  
(2003, Transworld Publishers)  
**Reading level:** Adult
- *Positive Foods for Kids*  
by Dr Jenny O'Dea  
(2005, Transworld Publishers)  
**Reading level:** Adult
- Nutrition Australia has a wide range of publications and fact sheets on nutrition. See their website  
<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org>  
or phone (07) 32574393

## Cooking and recipes

- *The Secret of Healthy Children*  
by Nutrition Australia  
(2003, Focus Publishing)  
**Reading level:** Adult
- *Food and Play 2–5 years*  
by Nutrition Australia  
(2003, The Australian Nutrition Foundation)  
**Reading level:** Adult

## Children's booklist

- *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato*  
by Lauren Child  
(2000, Candlewick Press)  
**Reading level:** Ages 4 to 8
- *I Eat Fruit*  
by Hannah Tofts  
(1998, Zero to Ten Ltd)  
**Reading level:** From 2 years upwards
- *I Eat Vegetables*  
by Hannah Tofts  
(1998, Zero to Ten Ltd)  
**Reading level:** From 2 years upwards
- *Eat Your Peas*  
by Kes Gray  
(2001, Random House Children's Books)  
**Reading level:** Ages 4–8
- *Each Peach, Pear, Plum*  
by Janet and Allan Ahlberg  
(1989, Penguin Books Ltd.)  
**Reading level:** Ages 9–12