

Expanding Sets

Children who have self-restricted diets tend to eat a limited range of 'preferred foods' or sets of foods.

In order to increase the range of foods a child feels are 'safe' to eat it is important to introduce foods which are similar to those they already accept.

Changing one aspect of a food at a time is more likely to help a child change. For instance if they eat only dry foods, expand the range of dry foods, don't do straight to wet foods. Consider the properties of the texture of the foods that they will eat (i.e how does it feel, what colour or shape is it?).

If possible involve the child in making decisions regarding what food to try next. Encourage them to look at, touch and smell foods and make a decision regarding what they might try next. If the new food is similar to one they already eat, they are more likely to try it.

When introducing new foods do not allow these to touch 'preferred foods' as this will contaminate the 'preferred food'. Have the new food on a separate plate/bowl.

Give the child opportunities to eat but no pressure to do so. Sometimes it can be helpful to offer a new food in a central plate for the whole family to help themselves from.

Watching others eating and enjoying the new food with no pressure on the child to eat can be helpful over time.

Play with new foods in a fun game activity away from meal or snack times where there is no expectation to eat the new food. The focus should be on exploring and handling the foods - see messy play handout

Below is a table to use as an example of what foods might be tried next:

Preferred food	Consider trying ONE of the following
White toast	Brown toast, white toasted bagel, toasted crumpet, warmed French bread cut in slice, toasted tea cake, chapatti, naan bread, pitta bread, etc
Rich tea biscuit	Plain digestive biscuit, round shortbread biscuit, other round plain biscuits, round biscuits with chocolate on top or rectangular plain biscuits, etc
Skips crisps	Quavers, organix stix, wotsits, aldi pea crisps, monster munch
banana	Banana milkshake made together, peaches, kiwi, other soft fruit
Strawberry frubes	Raspberry frubes, apricot frubes, strawberry petit filous pot