



Pediatric Feeding Disorders: What, Why, and When to Seek Help

Pediatric Feeding Disorder is defined as impaired oral intake that is not age-appropriate and is associated with medical, nutritional, feeding skill, and/or psychosocial dysfunction.

Your Child May Benefit From A Referral For Help If Any Of The Following RED FLAGS Are Present.

- Poor Weight Gain Or Weight Loss
- Respiratory Issues
- Choking, Gagging Or Coughing
- Picky Eating
- Vomiting
- Aversion Or Avoidance
- Nasal Reflux
- Food Range Less Than 20 Foods
- Traumatic Choking Incident
- Meal Times Are Battles
- Inability To Transition To Baby Food Purees By 10 Months Of Age
- Inability To Transition From Breast/ Bottle To A Cup By 16 Months Of Age
- Has Not Weaned Off Baby Foods By 16 Months
- Difficult For Everyone To Feed

When Picky Eating becomes a Problem:

PICKY EATERS
- Decreased range of variety of foods; will eat at least 30 foods.
- Able to tolerate new foods on the plate and can usually touch or taste a new food (even if reluctantly).
- Eats at least one food from most food texture or nutrition groups (i.e., purees, meltables, proteins, fruits).
- Frequently eats a different set of foods at a meal than the rest of the family (typically eats with the family).
- Sometimes reported by parent as a “picky eater” at well- child check-ups
- Foods lost due to “burn out” because of food jags are usually re- gained after a 2-week break
- Will add new foods to repertoire in 20-25 steps on Steps to Eating Hierarchy.

VS

PROBLEM FEEDERS
- Restricted range or variety of foods, usually less than 20 different foods.
- Cries and “falls apart” when presented with new foods, with complete refusal.
- Refuses entire categories of food texture or nutritional groups (i.e: hard mechanical, meats, vegetables, soft cubes) .
- Almost always eats different foods at a meal than the rest of the family (often doesn’t eat with the family).
- Persistently reported by parent as a “picky eater” across multiple well-child check-ups.
- Foods lost due to food jags are NOT re-acquired after taking a break, often resulting in a decreasing number of foods in repertoire.
- Adds new flavors in more than 25 steps on the Steps to Eating Hierarchy.

References: