

Early support for families



SURREY
YOUTH FOCUS

Questions to consider

- What do healthy eating patterns look like within a family?
 - What are the obstacles and challenges?

In this network group we will explore some of the frequently asked questions from families typically around fussy eating, portion size and expectations, food aisles in supermarkets and marketing for children, eating as a family, routines, cost, experiences of how to cook.

Obstacles to healthy eating



Suggestions made included:

- Families expressing that fresh healthy food is too expensive.
- Not having any routine around family life in general, such as bedtimes etc., which in turn doesn't help with food issues.
- Lack of rules and boundaries in general life leads to lack of good food eating patterns.
- Parents not being educated about healthy choices – particularly portion sizes.

Some tips to encourage healthy eating with young people



One attendee working with young people with additional needs asked for help from the group on how to persuade young people to eat healthily when they understand what to do to be healthy but don't want to follow the advice...

Suggestions made included:

- Ensuring young people have a good sleep and have a good general routine.
- Cooking their own fresh food from scratch – involve them in the cooking.
- Adding in hidden vegetables to baking (e.g. beetroot brownies or courgette muffins etc.).
- Acknowledge that sometimes the more nagging you do the more this makes young people go in the other direction!
- Ensure that the adults control their own eating habits at home and adults to control what they buy and have in the cupboards.
- Eat together at the table as a family regularly with no TV/devices/phones.
- Adults to be the role models for healthy eating and to lead by example.
- Make small changes to start with – e.g. rather than trying to increase amount of fruit eaten at once, try to increase to two pieces to start with rather than five (be realistic and gradual with changes – small steps).
- Importance of starting early with under 5s to establish early habits – get the right messages early in life.
- Adults to not totally forbid treats, instead to limit them/have in moderation. Suggest allowing young people to choose when they are going to have their weekly packet of crisps/chocolate etc. – gives them some control but know they are still having limits to sugary unhealthy food.

Encouraging children to eat a variety of foods

Suggestions made included:

- Parents as a role model.
- Make healthy eating the norm.
- Don't give up – often children need to try things many times before they will eat it and enjoy it – try a small amount on the plate at every meal so they become used to seeing it and then eventually they may eat it, repeatedly offering foods does work. Don't give in and substitute for their usual favourite foods – keep trying.
- Eat with other children who are good eaters (e.g. at nursery or with siblings and friends).
- If children have sensory issues with textures, consider allowing children to learn to play with different textures – starting with dry play so they can get used to touching different dry foods. Then progress to playing with wetter foods as children need to be comfortable with this before they will eat a new texture.

(Children that have swallowing issues, dysphagia must always be seen by Speech Therapist – speechandlanguageservice@surreycc.gov.uk)

Portion sizes



- Importance of educating children early about portion sizes, such as letting them know that one portion for them is the size of the palm of their hand.
- Use of stories for young children – e.g. Goldilocks and the Three Bears – for portion sizes.
 - Henry website offers advice – [click here](#)
- Marketing and packaging plays an important role in healthy eating. Important to check the traffic light labelling properly – people don't always realise that the traffic light system refers to just one portion, therefore need to know what that portion size is.