

## Purpose

This tells site teams how to identify, document and monitor a child who refuses to eat a variety of foods.

## Guidance

Some children are naturally very sensitive to taste, texture and smell. Their age and mood affect what they eat. Children often refuse to eat when there is too much pressure or when there is too little support.

The relationship between child and caregiver should be considered when a child refuses to eat or eats a limited variety of foods. Struggles around eating can get in the way of a child accepting a variety of foods. A positive feeding relationship happens when the division of responsibility around feeding and eating is in order. The caregiver is responsible for what the child is offered to eat and when and the child is responsible for how much they eat or whether they eat at all.

## Procedure

### 1. Identify

Site Team must identify children who routinely refuse to eat.

### 2. Document

Site Team must contact the parent or guardian and discuss the concern.

- Review the *Health & Developmental History*.
- Ask parent or caregiver about the child's eating pattern at home.
- Promote healthy eating choices/patterns and exercise.
- Review the division of responsibility around feeding with parent or guardian.
- Document the discussion with parents/guardian.
- Share the child's status and plans with team members.

### 3. Monitor and Model

- Encourage all children to choose balance and variety when they eat. Share information with children with simple statements like -  
    "We want you to eat \_\_\_\_ to help build a strong body."
- Pass and offer all foods twice. Reassure the child that they do not have to eat. Model that a simple "no thank you" will do.
- Continue to work with the family to make changes that promote healthy choices in their eating patterns and exercise.
- Request a consultation with the Regional Nutrition Coordinator if the family wants increased intervention.

## Related Documents

Nutrition: Request for Consultation  
Health and Developmental History

### Resources

#### ***Get Your Kid to Eat . . . But Not Too Much; Ellyn Satter, MS, RD***

This guide explores the relationship between parents, children, and food in a warm, friendly, and supportive way.

#### ***Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense, Revised and Updated Edition; Ellyn Satter, MS, RD***

Offers practical advice that takes into account the most recent research into such topics as:

- emotional, cultural, and genetic aspects of eating
- proper diet during pregnancy
- breast-feeding versus bottle-feeding
- introducing solid food to an infant's diet
- feeding the preschooler
- avoiding mealtime battles

[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

Developed and maintained by USDA, this website has a wide variety of information on nutrition, exercise and health. Tip sheets for parents are available in English and Spanish on many topics.