Inn Farm Private Day Nursery

Is your child a fussy eater?

There is nothing worse than having a toddler who used to eat everything suddenly becoming very fussy and faddy at mealtimes. Whilst we all may go through stages of ‘fancying’ a certain food we cannot survive on doughnuts and marshmallows alone! As children develop they like to hear their own voice and toddlers love to say “no” because it’s a great way to get attention. To avoid this issue at mealtimes ask open ended questions such as “Are you going to eat your carrots or peas first?” Similarly you can make mealtimes fun by pretending to be rabbits and seeing who can crunch their carrots the loudest!

Make meals bright and interesting with different textures and flavours for your toddler to try. One meal that I find is very popular is red, yellow and green pepper sticks, carrot sticks, cucumber sticks with hummus or guacamole. This gives the child the opportunity to make patterns with the different colours and they can dip the sticks in the dips. Also avoid giving your child different foods to the rest of the family so if casserole is on the menu everyone has it. Do not worry if they are not eating it as they will not waste away. The most common mistake I see is where parents feel guilty their child hasn’t eaten so start offering them a biscuit or rice cake after about an hour or indeed making them another meal. All this does is re-inforce to your child that it is acceptable to miss a meal as food will follow shortly. Parents will often question me when I say their child has eaten something at nursery that they don’t normally eat at home. The reason children tend to eat better at nursery is twofold, firstly everyone else is eating exactly the same meal and we constantly praise the children for eating well and secondly they know there is nothing to eat until the next mealtime. The children are active and on the go for the entire session resulting in them maybe being hungrier than they would be at home.

Try and make mealtimes a sociable occasion and involve your child in little jobs such as putting the cutlery on the table. Let them in the preparation of the meal wherever you can. I always find they can chop mushrooms as these are soft and can be done with an ordinary knife and if they are going into a casserole it doesn’t matter what they look like! Let them have a say as to whether they would like a big or little portion but include all elements of the meal on their plate. Also set a good example and eat a wide variety of foods yourself!