



PICKY EATING

FAMILY TREE THERAPIES | 2251 EAST PARIS AVE. SE, GR, MI 49546 | WWW.FAMILYTREETHERAPIES.COM

PICKY EATING: WHAT TO AVOID AND WHAT TO DO INSTEAD!

Avoid distractions while eating: Include the child in the process, fostering a sense of safety. Safety can be found by ensuring postural stability, including support through the feet. Safety can also be found through working with your therapist to develop the necessary fine motor, ocular motor, oral motor and sensory skills for feeding and safe swallowing.

Avoid sippy cups, pacifiers, and grazing: Develop a mealtime routine & include the child in the process, such as setting table, serving food and even prepping food. Use child sized utensils, cups and food portions.

Avoid playing into your child's food "jags" or restrictions: Work with your therapist to develop a safe food chaining program, considering variables of foods, such as shape, color, smell, taste, texture.

When considering picky eating, it is very important to work with your pediatrician to rule out medical challenges, such as dysphagia (difficulty swallowing), and aspiration. Your PCP may recommend a swallow study to investigate and ensure safety.

WHAT PICKY EATING MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

Picky eating can appear during mealtime as a refusal of certain foods, textures, smells, appearances, or avoidance of entire categories of foods. S/he may be very upset if their foods are touching. The child may limit their diet and be very controlling about food. They may also appear fearful or scared, nervous or anxious, or angry while eating.

TAKE A LOOK AT HISTORY:

A child that is a picky eater may have had a history of difficulty coordinating suck/swallow/breathe as an infant. They may have had a difficult time with latching while breastfeeding. There may have been a history of choking or gagging. Sometimes, picky eating can be a result of acid reflux and/or food sensitivities, intolerances, or allergies.

UNDERLYING FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PICKY EATING

When thinking of picky eating, it is important to work with your occupational therapist to address any potential sensory processing concerns, especially tactile. In addition, challenges with hand to mouth coordination, visual skills, postural stability, neck positioning and underlying neurosensorimotor reflexes can be contributing factors. Your speech and language pathologist can help identify challenges within the suck/swallow/breath coordination, swallow and gag reflexes, as well as coordination of the jaw lips and tongue needed for safe feeding.



Family Tree Therapies is a multi-disciplinary therapy clinic specializing in occupational and speech & language therapy. We help families **IDENTIFY** the underlying factors contributing to the concerns at hand, **UNDERSTAND** how these factors impact language, development, learning, play and friendships, and **EMPOWER** your family with tools and strategies for overcoming such factors.