

Sensory Food Aversion Information Sheet

Assessment:

- History/weaning
- Mouthing objects/pica
- How the family eats their meals
- How food is requested/communication style
- Textures/temperature of food
- Teeth cleaning/visits to dentist
- Messy play/food play trialled
- Sensory profile with other senses
- Previous interventions
- Other professionals involved e.g. dietician, speech therapist

Plan of action to consider:

- Mealtimes - Eat with the family around a table whenever possible to model good eating habits. Allow the child to see you eating and enjoying different foods. Ensure the child is sat comfortably at the table, i.e. in a chair of an appropriate size and with a footstool or step if needed to make sure they are comfortable and don't have dangling legs. Consider making your own place mats.
- Offering a small portion of different foods alongside usual food – separate plate, no pressure to eat but may explore in any appropriate way e.g. touch, smell, lick, taste but not eat, eat if they are in control. Can describe and discuss the food e.g. it's colour, texture, smell, taste (sweet, sour, fruity etc)
- Exploring food in play – this should be done away from mealtimes and in all environments e.g. home, school, short break service. The food desensitisation programme recording chart can be worked towards.
- Cooking activities to explore food even with ingredients not currently eaten. Explore the ingredients using all your different senses. Take photos/video to keep a record.
- Oral motor activities and/or deep pressure prior to eating. Consult with speech therapist around oral-motor skills for chewing and swallowing.
- Visuals and communication
 - Photos of foods eaten
 - Photos of new foods
 - Making choices or presenting food in dishes for family to serve themselves
 - Now and next so they know what happens after mealtimes
- Consider sensory needs within the environment e.g. noise and lighting in the room, temperature of the food, seating around the table and individual seating.

- Creating a food map and food chaining (see resource below)
- Present one new food at a time and clear away when child indicates they have finished.
- Praise for any food explored at whatever level they manage.
- Create a game...e.g. have some different foods on offer and a dice. Whatever number you roll is the number of spoonful's you have to try or creating a board game with different smells to explore on the way round.
- Keep a record of what food has been offered and when. What the child's response is. Try, try, try again.

References:

Sensory and motor strategies: Practical ways to help children and young people on the autism spectrum learn and achieve by Corinna Laurie (National Autistic Society, June 2018)

Messy Play Ideas / Food is Fun – Child Health Occupational Therapy NHS Tayside

Autism: Mealtimes, Eating and Diet (Leicester County Council)

Supporting fussy eaters at mealtimes (Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust)

Difficulties at mealtimes skills (Coventry Community Health Services NHS)

Picky eater Survival Guide www.meganboitano.com

<https://www.meganboitano.com/blog/sensory-food-aversion-refusing-textures?fbclid=IwAR3Xt1IVBL2b2wkEiB1KkNc4AFjGJA83TxSRZvFr27tHnTFU3aEuLny1GzQ>

<https://www.meganboitano.com/blog/getting-started-with-food-chaining-guide-picky-eaters>