

New Foods Step by Step

Trying new foods can be hard for children who have selective eating or pediatric feeding disorder. This will take time and patience.

Help your child learn to explore, eat, and enjoy more foods by using a method called food chaining.

What is food chaining?

Food chaining is a step-by-step process to help your child learn to eat new foods. It starts with a food the child already likes.

Then, you make small changes to the food—like the texture, temperature, or look of the food. This can help your child slowly get used to trying new foods.

How do you start food chaining?

- Start with food your child already likes and make a small change. For example:
 - cut a food into a different shape.
 - cook a vegetable instead of serving it raw.
 - change the look of the food by changing its colour.
 - add a sauce or dip to change the flavour: sweet, salty, spicy, tangy.
- When changing the texture by cooking or cutting, make sure your child has the skills to chew this texture.
- Once your child accepts the changed food add this new food to the list of foods they accept and eat.
- You can then move on to make another change to the same food.

Tips for success

- Try food chaining when your child is calm, relaxed, and a little hungry.
- Offer only 1 new food from the chain at a time so you don't overwhelm your child.
- Let your child use their sense of sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch to explore the food.
- This process could be quick, or it could take several months. You may skip steps, or you may need to add more steps. Go at your child's pace.
- It may take up to 15 or more tries for a child to accept the new food. Don't give up offering a food after a few tries if your child refuses it. Offer the food again at another time.
- If the small change you made to the food in the chain is not working, try making a smaller change or change something else.
- Offer the new food along with other foods your child likes to eat.
- Try offering the new food at snack time. Once accepted, offer it at lunch or dinner.
- Flavours can help change or enhance the taste of the food. Use different flavours to help move through the food chaining steps.
 - Try cheese, cinnamon, gravy, honey mustard, ketchup, plum sauce, salad dressings, seasoning mixes, or spices.
 - If your child already accepts a food with a sauce, offer the sauce with each step of the chain.

Food chaining examples

Here are examples to show you how to make taste, shape, colour, and texture changes to your child's favourite food. This will help to expand the foods they like and will eat.

Fast food French fries to cauliflower

Step 1: Fast food French fries



Step 2: Frozen French fries, home baked



Step 3: Homemade fries (made with fresh potatoes)



Step 4: Baked potato wedges



Step 5: Roasted diced potato pieces

Step 6: Soft boiled potato pieces

Step 7: Fork mashed soft boiled potato



Step 8: Mashed potato



Step 9: Add ½ tsp (2 mL) pureed cauliflower to mashed potato.



Step 10: Add more cauliflower and decrease the amount of potato until there's only pureed cauliflower.

Step 11: Slowly change the texture of the cauliflower to mashed, then small pieces, then small flowerets. Do this until the cauliflower is served in its whole floweret form.



Next Steps:

Strawberry yogurt tube to strawberries

Step 1: Strawberry yogurt tube



Step 2: Strawberry yogurt tube emptied into a cup or a bowl, eaten with a spoon



Step 3: Strawberry yogurt poured from a tub into a bowl, eaten with a spoon



Step 4: Add a small amount of pureed strawberries to strawberry yogurt in a bowl.

Step 5: Add small pieces of strawberry to the yogurt.



Step 6: Add larger pieces of strawberry to the yogurt.



Step 7: Use yogurt as a dip for sliced or whole strawberries.



Next Steps:

You can use this method with other flavours and fruits.

For example:

Step 1: Mix ½ tsp (2 mL) raspberry yogurt into ½ cup (125 mL) of strawberry yogurt.

Step 2: Increase the amount of raspberry yogurt, mixed with strawberry yogurt. Decrease the amount of strawberry yogurt each time, until your child is eating raspberry yogurt.



Repeat these steps with other flavours of yogurt.

Chicken nuggets to chicken

Step 1: Fast food chicken nuggets



Step 2: Store bought baked nuggets



Step 3: Homemade chicken nuggets. Cut chicken breast into pieces. Lightly coat with breadcrumbs or coating mix and bake until cooked.



Step 4: Pan fried or baked chicken breast without coating



Next Steps:

To try at home

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Next Steps:

Chocolate milk to white milk

Step 1 Chocolate milk



Step 1: 1 cup (250 mL) Chocolate milk with 1 tsp (5 mL) white milk added



Step 2: Add 2 Tbsp (30 mL) white milk and fill the rest of the 1 cup (250 mL) with chocolate milk.



Step 3: Slowly add more white milk and use less chocolate milk in a cup until there's only 1 cup (250 mL) white milk.



Next Steps:

To try at home

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Next Steps:

To try at home

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Next Steps:

