

New Foods: Step by Step Using the resource (What you need to know)

What is the purpose of this resource?

The 404102-NFS *New Foods: Step by Step* resource was developed as a tool for dietitians to help support parents with children who have feeding difficulties.

Some children are very selective and choose to eat only a few foods, or foods that are prepared and/or presented in a very specific way. This selectivity is often related to the appearance or texture of foods. These children tend to notice very slight differences between similar foods. For example, they may only eat a particular brand-specific food item such as McDonald's® chicken nuggets.

The resource describes a feeding strategy called *food chaining*. This strategy may help some children slowly, gently and gradually learn to explore, eat and enjoy more foods.

- A food chain is a list of foods that have similar features/properties that your child likes such as flavour, texture or aftertaste.
- Food chaining makes small changes in presentation (“just noticeable differences”) to foods that a child already eats.
- It helps expand on the foods that the child will accept.
- The goal of this strategy is to very gradually expand a child’s food repertoire to provide a healthy diet and adequate nutrition.
- The intent is not to get a child to eat every food that a parent may want.

When do I use this strategy?

Use food chaining with children who may:

- be picky or selective eaters,
- find it difficult to try new foods,
- find it hard to eat foods in a form that is different from what they usually deem acceptable.

Who should use this resource?

This strategy is for use by experienced dietitians when working with parents of children who have feeding difficulties.

How should food chaining be done?

It is very important that:

- this strategy should only be implemented as a nutrition counseling tool when there will be feeding therapist follow up and guidance.
- the child is ready to try new foods.
- the dietitian has a good understanding of the demeanor of child and the feeding relationship between child and family.
- the food chaining is done slowly and gently so that the child is not pushed or tricked into trying foods. If so, some children may refuse to eat or end up “dropping” preferred foods (i.e. losing the food from child’s food repertoire).

Where can I find additional information on food chaining?

AHS Pediatric Feeding Difficulties NPG: Sensory Factors Assessment & Intervention NPG

Cheri Fraker is a Speech Language Pathologist who developed this strategy and co-authored the book “Food Chaining: The Proven 6-step Plan to Stop Picky Eating, Solve Feeding Problems, and Expand Your Child’s Diet”.

Fraker, C., Fishbein M., Cox S., Walbert L. Food chaining. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press; 2007.

Fishbein M, Cox S, Swenny C, Mogren C, Walbert L, Fraker C. Food chaining: a systematic approach for the treatment of children with feeding aversion. Nutr Clin Pract 2006; 21 (2): 182-4.