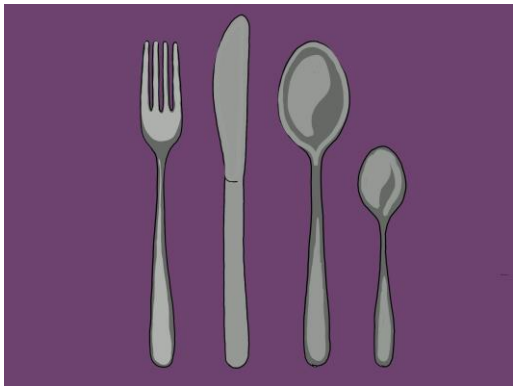
autism wellbeing

Mealtimes and food

Regulate your own emotions and senses before you begin. Then help your family regulate themselves.

Keep mealtimes as calm as possible. Talk to your health visitor or GP when you need to. Most children will eat something when they need to.

Respect preferences, even if they seem unusual. If someone prefers white and beige food, try finding as many different food groups in that colour so a more balanced diet is achieved.



Make learning about food a family hobby or interest. Grow some food to eat. Cook together and don't worry about experimenting as you don't have to eat it! Learn about food groups and a balanced diet.

Use plate dividers to stop certain foods touching each other or use separate plates.

Social eating is different to eating on your own or with your family – it can feel very overwhelming and you may need to take time before and after to regulate your senses and emotions and those of your family.

Mealtimes may not be the best place to try a new food – keep mealtimes safe and predictable. Try new food as an activity on its own where it is fine to have an extreme reaction – positive or negative! Play with the food, smell it, touch it, squish it about – that's fine – this activity is about exploring food, not table manners. It's also fine to change your mind or try something at a later date.

If cutlery is tricky to use then order food when you are out that doesn't require cutlery e.g. pizza.