**Top tips for presenting foods and drinks (plain version)**

Here are some things which you can consider when presenting food and drinks:

**Types of placemats**

It can be helpful to use a plain, wipeable placemat for meals and snacks. This gives a visual cue for eating and a good background for dishes and food.

**Style of mats and dishes**

Consider whether your child prefers colourful or themed dishes and utensils. Some children might enjoy finding hidden patterns and be motivated by character utensils, while others may find plain plates easier for seeing and identifying food.

**Neutral colours**

Using white or transparent plates and cups can help food stand out and support learning about the look of different foods and drinks.

**Serve their safe food**

Try to serve at least one familiar food at every meal and snack. Rotate favourites to keep them interesting.

**Size and shapes of foods**

Serve food in shapes and sizes suitable for their stage of development. When introducing a new shape or size, offer this alongside the familiar one.

**Use divider plates**

If your child does not like their food touching you can use plates with compartments to keep foods separate – these are often called divided plates. A silicone plate divider that suctions onto existing plates with a smooth flat base could also be helpful.

**Serve new foods alongside the main meal**

Try serving a small piece or tiny portion of new food in a dish next to their main meal plate. This can feel safer and more manageable.

**Consider portion sizes**

Think how much food there is in relation to the dish. When we want children to eat, it is so easy to overload their plates. Putting less on their plate looks less threatening. They can always have a second helping if hungry.

**Provide an escape route**

Have a container or napkin for them to spit, dribble or take foods out of their mouth into. Children are far more likely to try a food if they know they can get rid of it if it feels wrong or if they are just not ready to hold it in their mouth or chew it yet.

**Teach your child to wipe**

As soon as possible, teach your child to wipe their own hands and keep a cloth within reach to give them more control whilst learning to tolerate mess.

**Deconstruct your meals**

If your child struggles with mixed textures, try serving the food ‘deconstructed’ for some meals. For example, plain bread, ham and cheese instead of a sandwich; plain soft-cooked chicken, sauce on the side in a small bowl, and mashed potato topping served separately.

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