

# Common reasons children won't eat

## Pain

- GER
- Vomiting
- Retching/gagging
- Esophagitis/sore throat
- Acute illness
- Other GI symptoms
- Respiratory disease
- Infectious conditions

## Discomfort

- Nausea
- Allergies
- Cardiac condition
- Fatigue
- Constipation
- Nervous system over arousal
- Stomach digestion
- Congestion
- Renal conditions

## Immature motor, oral motor and/or swallow skills

- Choking
- Aspiration
- Cannot breathe + eat
- Poor oral strength
- Overstuffing
- Immature chew and/or tongue coordination
- Oral processing problems
- Balance problems/instability
- Poor hand-to-mouth coordination

## Sensory processing problems

- Modulation problems; under or over responsive
  - Visual, tactile, taste, sound or smell
- Modulation problems; craving or under aroused
- Sensory based movement problems; balance, proprioception
- Interoception problems (lack of responsiveness to internal hunger cues)
- Discrimination problems

## Learning/Behavioral

- Impaired learning capacity
- Cognitive delays
- Information processing problems
- Being in the midst of a developmental shift in cognition
- Being in the midst of a developmental independence stage

## Nutritional

- Calorie deficient
- Metabolic disorder
- Absorption disorder
- Inadequate macro-nutrient ratios
- Inadequate micro-nutrients

## Child factors

- Difficult temperament
- Anxious and/or fearful
- Low affect
- Highly distractible
- Hyperactive
- Developmental age

## Parent factors

- No positive reinforcement
- No modeling of appropriate eating behaviors
- Model poor eating behaviors and/or personal dislikes
- Extreme fears about lack of weight gain
- Punishes child at meals
- Coerces child
- Tricks child
- Distracts child with non-relevant conversation or activities
- Lack of education regarding best nutrition choice for their child based on their child's skill level

## Environmental factors

- Lack of exposure to a variety of foods
- Allowed to graze all day
- No feeding schedule
- Lack of structure to meals
- Toys/television/games during meals

The following information was created based on the work of: Toomey, K. (2010). *Common reasons children won't eat: Aversive conditioning. The Sequential Oral Sensory (SOS) Feeding Approach.*