



PARENTS GUIDE TO PARTIES

FOR CHILDREN ON
A LOW PROTEIN DIET

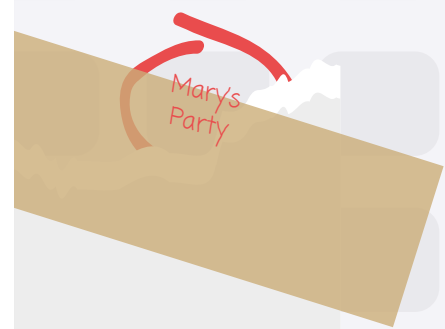
BY NCIMD PSYCHOLOGY



IT'S OK TO BE WORRIED!

Sending your child with a metabolic condition to social events can be a source of anxiety for many parents. As food is a central part of many events, it is understandable that concerns can be heightened during these times. It is not uncommon to feel apprehensive that your child might have to deal with unhelpful comments from those who don't understand their condition or be offered something they shouldn't eat when you are not around.

Parents naturally want to protect their children from anything upsetting - maybe by avoiding sending them to parties altogether so they don't have to deal with being different - but parties are an essential part of growing up and making friends. Remember that you will never be able to shield your child from all of life's difficulties, but you can equip them with the skills they need to succeed in life in spite of these difficulties.



HOW CAN I HELP?

There will always be food somewhere, so it is good to introduce them to this at an early age. Your child will need to learn what food they can and can't eat, become confident in asking questions and assert their dietary needs to others. You can prepare your child for attending social events by ensuring they have the tools to cope with their experiences. It's better to face situations that make you feel anxious than avoid them!



YOU ARE INVITED TO:



TEACH YOUR CHILD WHAT THEY CAN / CAN'T EAT



GIVE YOUR CHILD THE LANGUAGE TO EXPLAIN THEIR DIET TO OTHERS



HELP YOUR CHILD TO LEARN HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT FOOD

IF YOU ARE NERVOUS ABOUT SENDING YOUR CHILD TO A PARTY, YOU COULD START GRADUALLY I.E. WITH A PLAY DATE WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND

Return to:

If you need more information on your child's diet, the metabolic dietitians can help you.



HOW DO I TEACH MY CHILD WHAT THEY CAN EAT?

1. EXPLAINING THE CONDITION

When we eat food, our bodies break it down into little parts that we need to grow up big and strong. Your body can't break some foods into little parts. The kind of food that your body can't break down is called protein. You can't eat meat/fish/dairy and some other foods because they have too much protein in them. If you have too much protein, it is not good for you. But our bodies need protein to grow and be strong, so you also drink a special drink that gives you a special protein that you need. This will give you lots of energy to think and play!



HOW DO I TEACH MY CHILD WHAT THEY CAN EAT?

2. EXPLAINING THE DIET

We have to make sure that there is not too much protein in your food

If you eat food with lots of protein, it is not good for your body

Your body can't have too much protein. If you have too much protein you might get sick.


Children are heavily influenced by how you deal with things. Your behaviour and the language you use around diets can be invaluable in making your child feel accepted. Keep in mind that your own anxiety may be high when talking to your child about their diet. That's ok too, but try to stay calm. Children can often sense when something is wrong and may be reluctant to ask questions about their condition if they think it will upset you.



HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD EXPLAIN THEIR DIET TO OTHERS?

It is also important to give your child the language to talk about their condition to their friends and peers. Giving them the words to explain their diet and advocate for themselves will help them to build confidence for the future. Remember that children are often much better at coping with these kinds of situations than we think.

Metabolic conditions can be hard for children to understand so keep explanations simple! It can be helpful to ask your child to explain their diet in their own words, so you can make sure there is no confusion around food. Remember that it might take some time and practice for your child to be able to explain their diet to others.



If I eat those foods, it makes it hard for me to think and play, so I don't eat those foods

I need my special drink to help me grow and make me strong

My body can't have too much protein and I need to look after it so I can't always eat the same things as everyone else

HOW DO I TEACH MY CHILD TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT FOOD?




Practicing at home is a great way to build your child's confidence in asking questions about their special diet. You can role-play with your child at home or support them to advocate for themselves when you are out together.

You can start by telling your child what they can say if they want to ask others whether there is protein in particular foods: "Say: Is there protein in this?"

Once your child knows what to say, you can move to prompting them when they should ask: "You could ask about protein now?"

Gradually prompt your child less and less, until they are confident about how and when to ask about their diet.



Can you check that there's no protein in this?

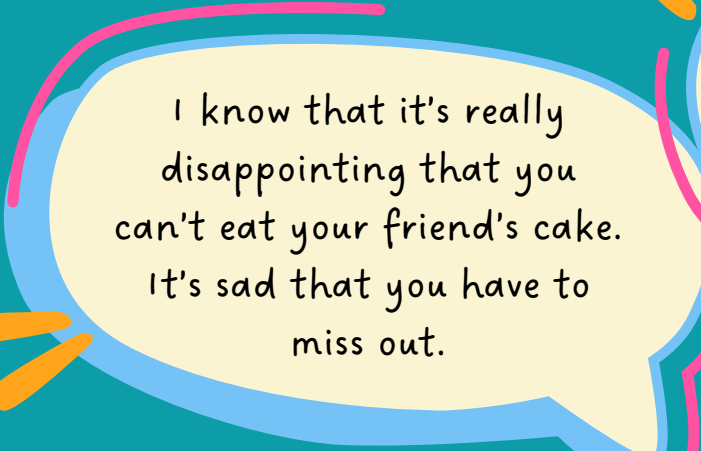
My body can't have too much protein

HOW DO I DEAL WITH MY CHILD'S DIFFICULT FEELINGS?

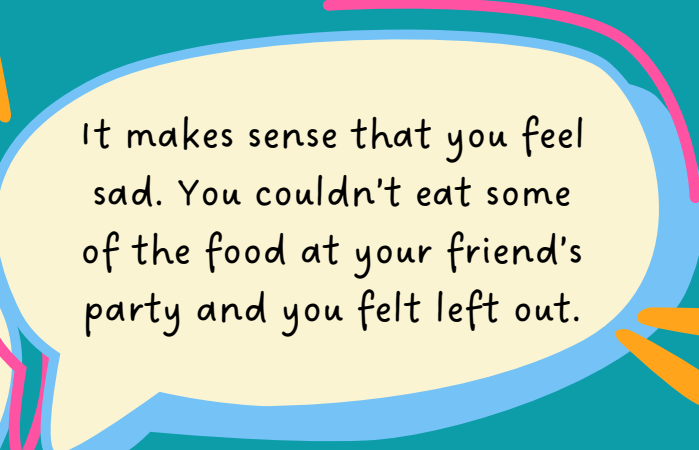


Your child may get upset about not being able to eat the same things as their friend's at parties. This is completely understandable and normal. It is important to acknowledge and validate their feelings: It is unfair that they can't have the same foods as their friends, but it is important that they understand that they can cope with hard things in life!

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU NAME WHAT YOUR CHILD IS FEELING:



I know that it's really disappointing that you can't eat your friend's cake. It's sad that you have to miss out.



It makes sense that you feel sad. You couldn't eat some of the food at your friend's party and you felt left out.



Can you speak to other parents about having safe foods available for your child on special days? If not, can you give your child nice (safe) food to bring with them?

HOW DO I DEAL WITH MY CHILD'S DIFFICULT FEELINGS?



You can't protect your child from embarrassment but you can help them to deal with it in a healthy way. Your child will look to you for cues on how to deal with difficult emotions.



If your child is upset about something, they don't need you to become upset on their behalf. Also don't assume that they want you to do something about it. Just listen!

Focus on praising the positive as opposed to dwelling on the negative. Reframing negative experiences for your child can help them to develop more balanced responses to upset or embarrassment

"I know you were disappointed that you couldn't eat your friend's birthday cake but it was great to see that you didn't let it ruin your day. You ate your safe foods and kept playing with your friends!"

HOW DO I DEAL WITH MY CHILD'S DIFFICULT FEELINGS?



You're child isn't the only one to have certain things they can't eat. Remind them that a lot of people (maybe friends, family members, neighbours) have special diets.

"Your friend Mary is allergic to peanuts so she can't have food that have peanuts in them"

"Your aunty is a vegetarian so she doesn't eat meat or dairy either".





REMEMBER

Parenting a child with a metabolic condition can be extremely challenging. It's important for you to be kind to yourself, even if things don't go the way you had planned.

If talking to your child about their condition or sending them to parties causes anxiety, you can ground yourself by:

- Placing a hand on your heart
- Taking 3 deep breaths
- Noticing what you're feeling and naming it
- Reminding yourself that emotions are temporary
- Letting the emotion go

