Poor appetite is when a child does not seem to want to eat much or at all.

It is normal for children older than 1-2 years to have appetites that vary a lot.

What causes poor appetite?

- End of a growth spurt
- Illness
- Low iron or anemia
- Body or oral pain
- Oral sensory problems
- Snacking between meals
- Stress and trauma

Parents often over estimate how much a young child needs to eat, so they think they aren’t eating enough.

Poor appetite does not usually last long. When the illness goes away, appetite should return to normal.
Tips & Tricks

- Make the most of appetite! Children are usually hungriest for breakfast and after school.
- Set an eating schedule.
- Offer small, frequent meals.
- Limit snacking and drinks before and between meals.
- Encourage activity before mealtime.
  - Shop, cook and eat together.
  - Address stress and anxiety.

Stress can affect how the body absorbs nutrients.

Get help if...

- Your child’s food intake drops for longer than a week.
- Your child’s growth or weight is falling.
- You are concerned.
When your child has limited intake or poor weight gain...

Make sure that every food counts!

**Protein at every meal and snacks.**

- Serve snacks that contain nut or seed butter, such as peanut butter sandwiches or apple sticks with almond butter.
- Add meat or fish to sandwiches, salads, and soups, or serve on their own.
- Offer beans and lentil soup or dips.

**Dense, ripe fruits. Starchy veggies.**

- Add starchy vegetables (potatoes, sweet potatoes, beets, pumpkin, carrots, corn, green peas, lima beans, plantains) to soups, stews, and curries.
- Offer dense, fully ripe fruits (versus watery fruits) like papaya, avocado, banana, pear and pineapple. Make smoothies.

**Add high-calorie foods to dishes.**

- Add cheese to scrambled eggs, meals and/or snacks, or on bread.
- Add 1 Tablespoon of powdered milk or formula to dairy products or mix into other dishes.
- Add nuts, seeds, raisins, and other dried fruits to bread, yogurt, cooked meals, and as snacks.
- Mix vegetable oil into dishes or when preparing meats, vegetables and grains. Oils can also be added to breads.

**Offer energy-containing drinks.**

- Offer energy-containing drinks in the middle or toward the end of a meal unless there is a fight over it.