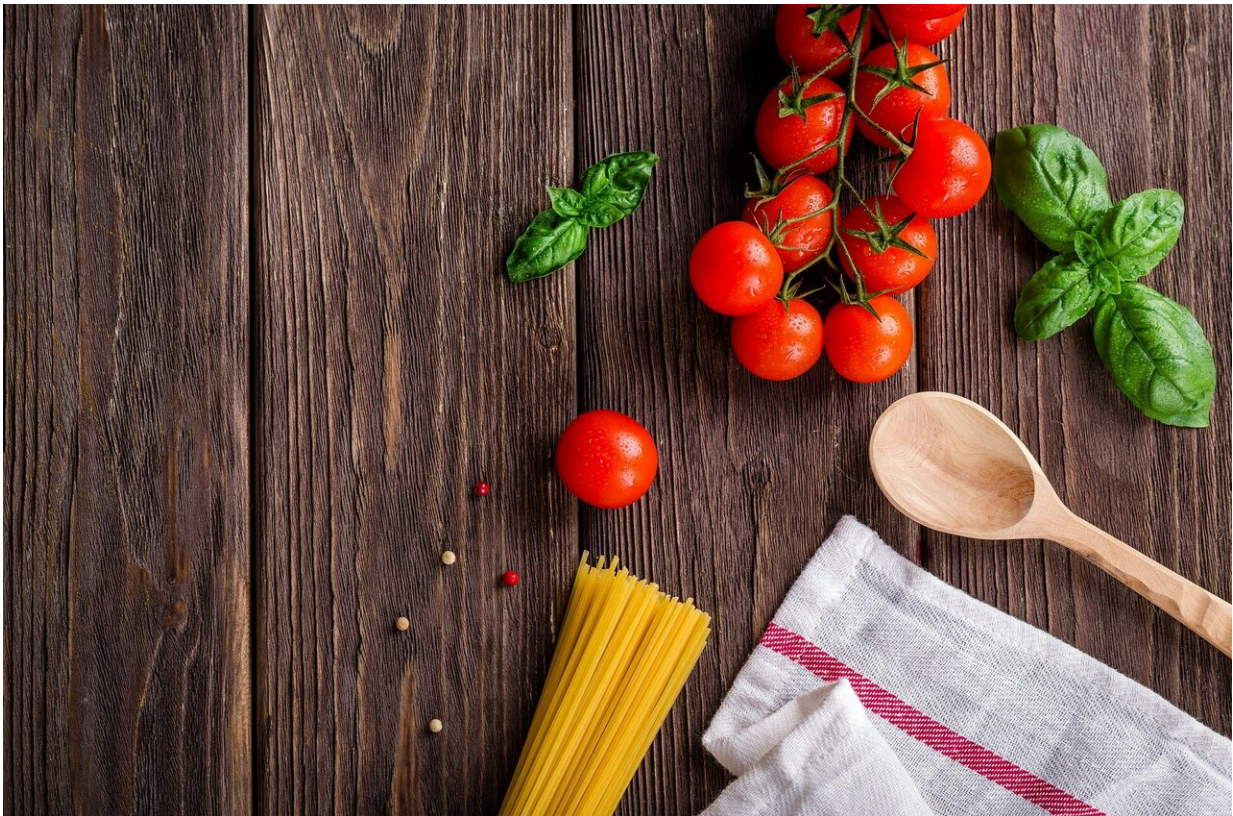


# Tight household finances nurture fussy eating

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Thrifty parents in low-income households could be inadvertently encouraging unhealthy fussy eating habits in their children.

University of Queensland researcher Professor Karen Thorpe said parents in poorer households were keenly aware that uneaten [food](#) amounted to extra strains on household resources.

"Parents seeking to avoid waste often give their children a narrow range of foods they know they like and accept, but this can inadvertently limit exposure to a variety of healthy foods," Professor Thorpe said.

A Chief Investigator in the UQ-administered Life Course Centre, Professor Thorpe led a study involving mothers of pre-[school children](#) aged two to five living in a low-income community in south-east Queensland.

"Eleven per cent of mothers reported themselves as 'food insecure', meaning they had run out of food and been unable to buy more at some time in the last 12 months," she said.

"This group was less likely to have fruit available in their homes, compared to [low-income families](#) that didn't experience food-insecurity.

They were more likely to prepare separate meals for fussy eaters, also narrowing the children's exposure to a variety of healthy foods.

Professor Thorpe said children learned to like a wide variety of healthy foods through exposure in their [early years](#), and parents should re-offer rejected healthy food to "fussy" children.

"Our study highlights a need for more tailored advice from [health professionals](#), researchers and policymakers to the parents of fussy eaters experiencing economic adversity and food insecurity," Professor Thorpe said.

The research represents Stage 1 of Life Course Centre-funded project,

Mealtimes Matter, on food insecurity and food socialisation in low-income communities.

The study, published in *Appetite* included surveys at childcare centres, playgroups, a family fun day and an immunisation clinic, and involved researchers from the University of Queensland and the Queensland University of Technology.

**More information:** Holly A. Harris et al. A comparison of maternal feeding responses to child fussy eating in low-income food secure and food insecure households, *Appetite* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2019.03.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2019.03.005)

Provided by University of Queensland

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