

What happens when your picky toddler becomes a teen?

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Toddlers who are picky about their food are not deficient in essential nutrients compared to their peers when they are teenagers.

However, the few children who were persistent [picky eaters](#), those who were less able to change and adapt their [eating habits](#), showed pronounced differences in [food intake](#) at the age of 13, including a higher intake of sugar, according to new research published in *Nutrition*.

Picky eating in toddlers is a well-documented phase when children don't want to try new foods or can show very strong food preferences. It can create much worry for parents, and has created a whole market for advice, guidance and tools to encourage [young children](#) to try lots of new tastes and textures.

University of Bristol researchers examined food questionnaires and records of children in the Children of the 90s study to find out if those identified as picky eaters at three years old had differences in their diet by the time they were aged 10 and again at 13 years old compared to non-picky eaters in the study.

They found that at the age of 10 the diets of picky eaters had similar differences to their peers as they did when they were three years old. Generally they ate less fruit, vegetables and meat. By the time they were 13 years old there were still differences but they were less pronounced.

Dr. Caroline Taylor from the University of Bristol's Centre for Academic Child Health led the research and commented:

"We know that picky eating is a common behaviour in three year olds and is usually resolved by the time children start school. However, very little is known about the diet of picky eaters as they develop into teenagers.

"While we found that there were some differences in nutrition at the ages of 10 and 13, they were not large and are unlikely to have [adverse effects](#) on [general health](#) and development. However, there was a low

intake of fruit and vegetables in the diets of the majority of children even those who were not picky. I would like to see more support for parents, in general, to help their children widen their food choices at an early age so that this continues through adolescence.

"There should be strategies developed for use in pre-[school years](#) to support parents. As well as the development of tools to help identify [children](#) who are likely to become fixed in their picky eating behaviour so that extra support can be given.

"Thanks to the wealth of information available from the Children of the 90s study over time we're now able to make these conclusions and recommendations."

More information: Caroline M Taylor et al. Diet at Age 10 and 13 Years in Children Identified as Picky Eaters at Age 3 Years and in Children Who Are Persistent Picky Eaters in A Longitudinal Birth Cohort Study, *Nutrients* (2019). [DOI: 10.3390/nu11040807](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11040807)

Provided by University of Bristol

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