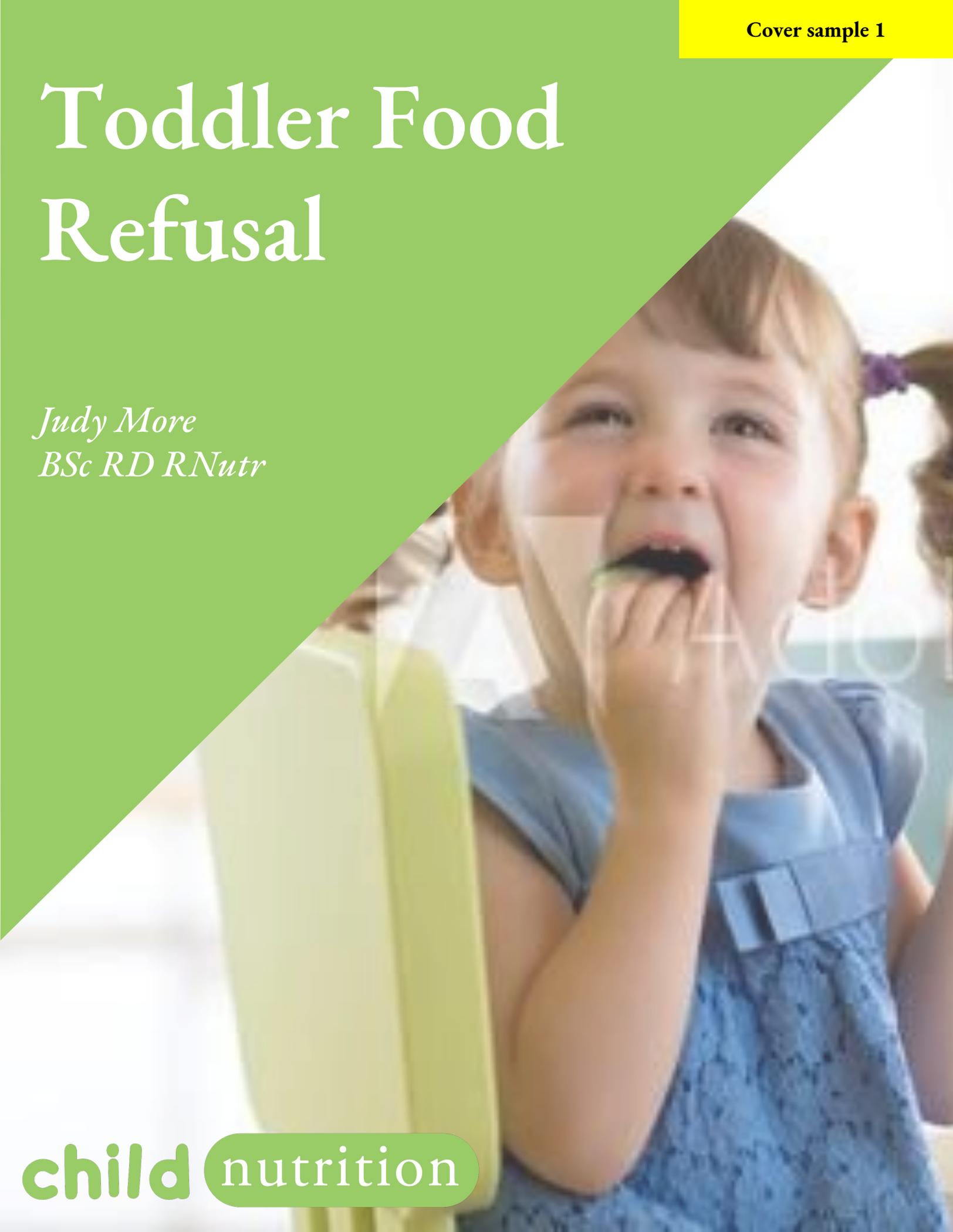


Toddler Food Refusal

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child nutrition

A young child with pigtails is shown eating a green vegetable, likely a cucumber, in a brightly lit setting. The child is wearing a blue dress and is seated at a table. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and a window.



Judy More is a Registered Dietitian and Registered Nutritionist who specialises in child nutrition.

She is an honorary lecturer at Plymouth University and a member of the Royal Society of Medicine, the Association for Nutrition and SENSE Nutrition.

She set up her Child Nutrition consultancy after many years experience working as a paediatric dietician in NHS hospitals and community trusts.

Toddler Food Refusal

Who is the best judge of the right quantity?

Avoiding the problem

Toddlers don't need to eat well at every meal, every day

Why might he eat less than usual?

What can you do?

Toddlers who are learning to assert themselves say “no!”, and enjoy doing it.

Parents tend to worry more when they refuse food and meals than when they refuse to wear a hat or socks for example. For them it is all part of the same game. If you find yourself in a food battleground keep calm and remember:

It is your responsibility to provide good healthy food (following food combining) but it is up to your child to choose how much and which of those healthy foods he will eat.

Who is the best judge of the right quantity?

How much food a toddler eats each day can vary considerably and on days when he doesn't eat well parents often worry unnecessarily.

A common mistake made is to believe that you, the parent knows better than your toddler how much he should eat. You may have in your mind a set quantity. It may be the contents of the jar you have opened, the quantity of food you have lovingly prepared or the amount another toddler has eaten. It may even be an educated guess based on roughly the quantities eaten over the previous few days. The snag in all this is that children's appetites vary widely from day to day and on how they are feeling at the time.

It is very important to respect your child's decision that he has eaten enough of what you are offering. Many problems are set up by extending the meal to coerce the child to eat more. The parent usually ends up losing; you invest time and effort with little return and your child can become miserable and upset. If this pattern occurs repeatedly, your child will begin to associate meal times with stress and anxiety and will try to avoid them.

Make sure each meal is balanced and nutritious so that when he does eat well he is getting plenty of nutrients.