

Family Matters

Looking after you and yours

Parenting

■ Parenting column by Sasha Brown, family care manager at Community Family Care, Staunton



Dealing with meal battles

FUSSY eaters and the ongoing meal-time battle can be a nightmare for many parents and can lead to some stressful mealtime experiences.

You want them to eat something nutritional but all they want is chocolate or anything but fruit and vegetables.

It is a natural response for children to fear unknown foods and go through stages of having different preferences.

Here are some tips to help.

Don't stress

If a lot of pressure is put on children to eat certain foods it can be stressful for both you and them if things don't go to plan.

This can lead to negative experiences associated with that food.

Encouragement to eat and try new foods needs to be a positive experience for everyone involved in order for it to be successful.

Don't stress about the small things – as long as your child has had enough to eat, is it the end of the world that they haven't finished all of their peas?

Sometimes simply trying food is a really positive start.

Get involved

Encourage children to help with cooking. Giving them manageable tasks that get them involved with mealtimes can encourage them to want to try the fruits of their labour.

Involve them in picking meal choices – we all have days when we don't quite fancy some things and crave others so if your child picks what they fancy it, can aid success.

Make it fun

Make trying new foods and eating more fruit and veg a positive experience for children.

Start early on and make it a regular family activity to try new things.

Positive exposure to new foods on a regular basis encourages children to like and try new things.

Try dipping fruit in chocolate or yoghurt or cutting vegetables into fun shapes for a different way of presenting foods to children.

Get clever and hide fruit and veg in things that your children will readily eat – sweet potato chips are a great alternative to chips and a spaghetti bolognese is a great way of blitzing a load of vegetables into the tomato sauce.

Set a good example

Eating together can help set a good example to children. If you're a picky eater yourself children will assume that is normal mealtime behaviour and will imitate it.

Get involved in trying new foods with your children and use older siblings to aid in reassuring younger children that the new food is yummy.

Review how you get on with different foods and remain positive – you can always try and introduce them again at a later date.

“Sometimes simply trying food is a really positive start”

8 rights to help working parents

LISA SALMON FINDS OUT ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM THE WORKING FAMILIES CHARITY

BEING a working parent can be tough. There are plenty of legal measures designed to make it a little easier, however many working parents don't know what their rights are.

New research has found 41% of parents are unaware of their legal right to take unpaid parental leave to care for their children, and 75% admit to never having taken advantage of this entitlement.

The research by employment law specialists Crossland suggests 27% of parents will spend up to £800 on holiday club fees over the school summer holidays, when they could have simply taken unpaid leave. Take-up of the entitlement is 25%.

Employment solicitor Liz Gardiner, advice service development leader at Working Families, says: “Parental leave, flexible working and emergency leave can all be useful tools for parents trying to balance work and family life.”

Working Families outlines the main parental rights as follows:

1 MATERNITY LEAVE

ALL women who are employees are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity leave. When you go back to work after the first six months of maternity leave, you have the right to return to your old job on your old terms and conditions.

If you take more than six months of maternity leave, you can return to your old job unless it's “not reasonably practicable”, in which case your employer must offer you a suitable alternative job on similar terms and conditions.

2 MATERNITY PAY

TO get Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) you need to have worked for your employer since before you became pregnant, and still be employed by them 15 weeks before the baby's due. Maternity pay is 90% of your average earnings. For the next 33 weeks, it's 90% of your average earnings or £140.98 per week, whichever's lower.

3 MATERNITY ALLOWANCE

IF you can't get SMP, you may be entitled to Maternity Allowance (MA) if you're employed or self-employed, based on your work record in the 66 weeks before the

baby's due. If you're self-employed, you must have paid Class 2 National Insurance or have been eligible to do so.

4 PATERNITY LEAVE

ONLY fathers/partners who are employees are eligible for paternity leave. You'll also need to have worked continuously for your employer for 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the baby's due, and still be employed by the employer on the day the child is

born. You can choose when to take your leave, in a period between the birth and 56 days after, for one or two consecutive weeks. Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) is paid at £140.98 per week (or 90% of average earnings, whichever's lower).

5 SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

ONLY parents who are employees can take SPL, and the other parent must also have some recent work history (which could be self-employed or employed).

SPL can be taken at any time during the first year of the baby's life, but there are two weeks of compulsory maternity leave which the mother must take. There are a maximum of 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay that may be shared. SPL is created by the mother curtailing her maternity leave and/or pay, so the father/partner can take the balance. It's paid at the flat rate of £140.98 (or



You can take unpaid leave to care for your sick child

ASK THE EXPERT

Why does my baby always cry after feeding?

GP Dr Sarah Jarvis says:

“Coping with a crying baby, particularly one that seems inconsolable, can be physically and emotionally draining. But it's important to remember it's not your fault.”

“All babies cry and most of the time it's harmless and part of their natural instinct.”

“Feeding problems such as

colic can cause babies to cry more than normal, particularly around feeding. Feeding issues affect up to half of all infants, and colic affects up to one in five babies.”

“As well as the intense crying, other symptoms of colic can be clenched fists, an arched back, and a red or flushed face in an otherwise

completely healthy baby.”

“Reflux and regurgitation, when babies bring up their feed during or shortly after feeding, and constipation, are also common baby feeding problems which cause general irritability and discomfort.”

“Cows' milk allergy, albeit less common (affecting around 2 to 7.5% of babies under one