Eating with FASD – Adolescents

Adapted from *Strategies not Solutions* - NOFASD Australia. For deeper guidance and practical strategies, see the full booklet.

What's important to understand

Adolescents with FASD may:

- continue to struggle recognising hunger or fullness, and rely on a small range of 'safe foods'
- overeat or go long periods without eating, with a strong urge to "eat now"
- want more independence around food, while still needing support to manage it safely
- be strongly drawn to highly processed foods that offer quick comfort or satisfaction
- become distracted during food preparation or clean-up
- need ongoing support and scaffolding, even when expectations increase
- feel shame or frustration when support doesn't match expectations

These differences reflect brain-based challenges with memory, impulse control, planning and judgement — not laziness, lack of motivation or refusal to grow up.

What can help

Continue what worked in childhood

Supports that helped earlier often remain necessary, even if they look different.

Realistic independence

Practising food skills with supervision, structure and clear goals (e.g. following picture instructions, using the microwave safely).

Supervised food access

Support around food preparation, storage and clean-up; some families may need to supervise or limit access at times.

Clear routines and anchors

Regular meals and snacks, with consistent routines and mealtime anchors, to reduce reliance on internal hunger cues.

Lower expectations during stress

Fatigue, transitions and emotional load can reduce capacity to manage eating independently, especially when food choices feel unsafe or limited.

Preserving dignity

Offering support quietly and respectfully, without drawing attention or using shame.

What can make it harder

- Age-based expectations that don't match developmental needs
- Supports not being available at the level or for the duration needed
- Expecting skills to generalise without guidance and practice
- Supervision for safety being experienced as mistrust or punishment

When to seek extra support

If eating patterns are causing ongoing concern or affecting wellbeing or physical health (e.g. weight or dental concerns), seek guidance from a health professional.

A strengths-based reminder: Needing support is not a failure, it's a reflection of how the brain works.

nofasd australia | NATIONAL ORGANISATION for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
1800 860 613
www.nofasd.org.au