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### Picky eating in young children and its relationship to child and maternal characteristics

**Background:** Picky eating is very common in children and usually transient. However in a minority of children it marks the beginning of a lifetime of eating difficulties and disordered eating. The goals of the current study were to characterise children whose picky eating was persistent and potentially troubling.

**Methods:** At baseline over 1000 children mean age 3.4 were ascertained and followed over three years. The children's eating habits, the mothers feeding practices, the mothers perfectionism and trait anxiety, the children's temperament, fearfulness, ritual behavior, executive function and behavioral problems were all assessed via maternal report.

**Results:** At baseline, 18.6% of the children were picky eaters, with an over-representation of eldest children. At follow-up a subgroup of these children, about a quarter of those identified at baseline as picky eaters were still picky. The more persistent picky eaters had a shyer and more negatively emotional temperament, more ritualistic behavior and childhood fears, and they had more anxious mothers who were also more perfectionistic, more authoritarian, and more invested in controlling and monitoring their children's eating.

**Conclusions:** It seems as if picky eating persists more in children with a more anxious and shy temperament, more anxious and perfectionistic mothers, who are authoritarian in imposing their authority. Interventions should target the maternal concern, and rigidity and help mothers take a more relaxed and playful attitude to feeding and eating.

### Biography

Ada H Zohar completed her PhD at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a Post-Doctorate at Yale University School of Medicine. She is a faculty member at Ruppin Academic Center, where she headed the Clinical Psychology program and served as Dean of the School of Social and Community Sciences from 2009-2016. She is recently a Visiting Scientist at Washington University School of Medicine. She has published more than 70 papers in refereed journals and has been serving as an Editorial Board Member of *PeerJ*, as well as serving as an incidental Reviewer for many peer-reviewed journals and funding agencies.

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