



Feeding Tips for Children

In general

- Always supervise your child when eating and eat meals as a family as much as possible.
- Eat the same meals as your child. It is important to have them see you eating what they are expected to eat.
- Have your child sit while eating versus grazing around the house or eating on the run. This prevents choking as well as creates positive eating habits.
- Ensure that your child is sitting upright, in a suitable chair for their age and needs (highchair, booster chair, wheelchair etc). They should be able to access the food on the table/tray with ease.
- Provide a consistent time for meals/eating. In general, 3 meals and 2 snacks per day is a good rule of thumb.
- Abide by the Division of Responsibility: Caregivers determine what is offered and when; children decide how much they will eat
<http://ellynsatterinstitute.org/dor/divisionofresponsibilityinfeeding.php>
- When feeding your child, ensure they are in a calm state (not crying or laughing).
- If you are concerned about your child's growth and/or nutritional intake, please contact their doctor or a dietician.

When Starting Solids

- Start with soft/mashed foods and over time, increase textures and size. Hard foods such as raw fruits and vegetables as well as those with skins can be challenging to eat.
- Monitor how much food your child puts in their mouth at once by only giving them a couple pieces of food at one time. When they have finished their food, they can ask for more.

- Encourage your child to ‘chew, chew, chew’ and ‘swallow’ their food. You can remind your child to do this by telling them as well as tap their cheeks to encourage chewing.
- It’s best to avoid the following foods in young children. Most children under the age of four do not understand the need to chew thoroughly or to spit the item out.

Cherries with pits	Hard candy	Raisins	Whole grapes
Large Pieces of Meat	Nuts and Seeds	Stringy foods	Hot dog, whole chunks
Popcorn kernels	Whole olives	Raw apples, pears, carrots, beans	

<http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/feeding-eating/feeding-infants-toddlers/chokable-foods>

When starting self-feeding

- Give lots of encouragement and expect a mess. The mess is part of the learning process. Spreading a shower curtain under the highchair or table may help with clean up.
- Place small pieces of food on your child’s tray and encourage them to pick them up and bring them to their mouth.
- Offer a spoon or fork to a child to hold while they are eating.
- Use child-sized utensils with thick handles. Smaller utensils are typically easier to control.
- Practice scooping, pouring and filling containers with household items such as uncooked rice, cereal, dry beans, sand, etc. Start with large scoops (measuring cups) and move to smaller ones (spoons).
- Start with thick, sticky foods like yogurt, oatmeal, applesauce, mashed potatoes, etc. These types of foods stick to the spoon.

The following handout was created by the Feeding Team at George Jeffrey Children’s Centre. The above are general ideas to foster positive feeding in and with your child.