

Feeding Infants and Toddlers for the First Year

Developmental Skills

BABY'S AGE

MOUTH PATTERNS

HAND AND BODY SKILLS

FEEDING SKILLS OR ABILITIES

Birth through 5 months



- Suck/swallow reflex
- Tongue thrust reflex
- Gag reflex

- Poor control of head, neck, trunk
- Brings hands to mouth around 3 months

- Swallows liquids but pushes most solid objects from the mouth

5 months through 9 months



- Draws in upper or lower lip as spoon is removed from the mouth
- Up-and-down munching movement
- Can transfer food from front to back of tongue to swallow
- Tongue thrust and rooting reflexes begin to disappear
- Gag reflex diminishes
- Opens mouth when sees spoon approaching

- Sits with support
- Good head control
- Uses whole hand to grasp objects (palmer grasp)

- Takes in a spoonful of pureed or strained food and swallows it without choking

8 months through 11 months



- Begins to control the position of food in the mouth
- Up-and-down munching movement
- Positions food between jaws for chewing
- Moves food from side to side in mouth
- Begins to curve lips around rim of cup
- Begins to chew in rotary pattern

- Begins to sit alone unsupported
- Follows food with eyes
- Begins to use thumb and index finger to pick up objects (pincer grasp)
- Sits alone easily
- Transfers objects from hand to mouth

- Begins to eat mashed foods
- Eats from a spoon easily
- Drinks from a cup with some spilling
- Begins to feed self with hands

10 months through 12 months



- Rotary chewing (diagonal movement of the jaw as food is moved to the side or center of the mouth)

- Begins to put spoon in mouth
- Begins to hold cup
- Good eye-hand-mouth coordination

- Eats chopped food and small pieces of soft, cooked table food
- Begins self-spoon feeding with help

What to Feed the Baby

BABY'S AGE

WHEN BABIES CAN:

Birth through 3 months

- Only suck and swallow

LIQUIDS ONLY:

- Breast milk
- Infant formula with iron



4 months through 7 months

- Draw in upper or lower lip as spoon is removed from mouth
- Move tongue up and down
- Sit up with support
- Swallow semisolid foods without choking
- Open the mouth when they see food
- Drink from a regular cup with help, with spilling

ADD SEMI-SOLID FOODS

- Infant cereal with iron
- Strained vegetables*
- Strained fruit*

*May be started later in the age range



8 months through 11 months

- Move tongue from side to side
- Begin spoon feeding themselves with help
- Begin to chew and have some teeth
- Begin to hold food and use their fingers to feed themselves
- Drink from a cup with help, with less spilling

ADD MODIFIED TABLE

- Mashed or diced soft fruit
- Mashed or soft-cooked vegetables
- Mashed egg yolk
- Strained meat/poultry
- Mashed cooked beans or peas
- Cottage cheese, yogurt or cheese strips
- Pieces of soft bread
- Crackers
- Breast milk, iron-fortified formula, or fruit juice in a cup



References

Feeding Infants: A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs, United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, FNS-258

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