



Feeding Skills: Developmental Milestones for Infants and Toddlers

EARLYINTERVENTIONSUPPORT NOVEMBER 11, 2013 CHILD DEVELOPMENT, INFANTS 3 - 12 MONTHS, TODDLERS 12 - 36 M MONTHS

Feeding your baby is one of the most important aspects of child care. When it does not work as you expect or is a stressful event, it can be of great concern. Here are some developmental milestones to look for at this age:

Feeding Skills at 4 - 6 Months

- Baby will feed in semi-reclined position
- Visually recognizes bottle
- Continues to bring hands and toys/objects to mouth
- Uses hands to pat bottle/breast during feeding
- Begins to eat puree/smooth creamy foods by sucking food from a spoon
- Child should demonstrate a good coordination of suck and swallow
- By 6 months, child will swallow strained foods
- Recognizes the bottle or breast

Feeding Skills at 6 - 8 Months

- Eating in more upright positions
- Tongue can lateralize/move toward cheeks
- Mouthing and munching spoon, toys and biter biscuits
- Holds own bottle
- Drinking from a cup held for child
- Eating mashed, soft table foods (potatoes, carrots, fruits, etc.) with creamy, lumpy texture
- Drooling less except for teething
- Bite and release observed
- Moves food around in mouth using tongue, bites and chews toys

Feeding Skills at 8 - 12 Months

- Sitting upright during meals
 - Biting and chewing foods voluntarily
 - Eating finger foods with pureed meats
 - Meats should stay one consistency below vegetables and fruit child is eating
 - Controlled sustained bite Developing a rotary chew pattern Finger feeds self Holds spoon during meals
 - Moves food around in mouth using tongue, bites and chews toys Finger feeds self, chews food
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Feeding Skills at 12 - 18 Months

- Eating table foods, but meat chopped/cut up very small
 - Lips closed during chewing
 - Appetite decreases during this time resulting in food refusal occasionally
 - Brings a spoon to mouth and turns spoon over
 - Holds and drinks from a cup with some spills
 - Appetite decreases, may refuse food
 - Scoops food with spoon, brings food to mouth
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Feeding Skills at 18 - 24 Months

- Chewing with rotary jaw movements
 - Distinguishes between food and non-food items
 - Gives up bottle
 - Gives empty bowl or dish to an adult
 - Scooping foods to feed self, with some spills
 - Plays/explores foods with hands
 - Holds small cups with one hand
 - Plays with food Knows the difference between food and non-food items
 - Transitions to a cup
 - Develops clear food preferences
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Feeding Skills at 24-30 Months

- Holds spoon between fingers, palm up
- May have definite food likes and dislikes
- Often the time 'picky eater' shows up

- Unwraps food
 - Holds spoon
 - Washes hands
 - May show dislike and refuse certain foods
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Feeding Skills at 30-36 Months

- Uses a fork to feed self
 - Wipes mouth with napkin
 - May reject many foods due to slower rate of growth and more mature sense of taste
 - Attempts to serve self at table with spills
 - Pours liquids from small containers
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