

happy mealtimes



If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's eating and drinking skills, contact your health visitor. General advice can also be obtained from your local speech and language therapist.

For help with more severe feeding difficulties, there are specialist speech and language therapists who can assess your child and give advice on how to help your child eat or drink better. These difficulties may include:

- Inability to bottle feed with poor weight gain.
- Frequent coughing and choking during mealtimes and frequent chest infections.
- Physical difficulty with chewing.
- Gagging on certain food textures



Referral for these types of difficulty may be made by any health professional (0-19 Specialist Public Health Nurse (formerly health visitor), doctor, school etc) but must have the agreement of your child's doctor.

Useful websites

Department of Health Weaning Publications:
www.dh.gov.uk/en/DH_4117080

NHS baby weaning: www.nhs.uk/conditions/babies-weaning
www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk

Help us get it right

If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email lch.pet@nhs.net

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

A guide to feeding development in infants, and making the most of meal times for you and your child

Produced by The Leeds Speech and Language Therapy Service
Building communication skills for life

This leaflet describes some of the stages of normal feeding development, however all children are different and may not fit exactly into these stages.

Normal feeding development

Newborn

- Your baby needs to be fully supported.
- Tongue moves backwards and forwards and the suck is strong.
- Your baby is able to co-ordinate sucking, swallowing and breathing. At this stage the baby is fed only liquids from the bottle or breast.

By six months

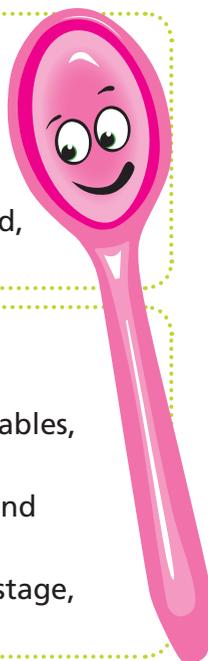
- Your baby can now sit upright with support.
- Your baby can take food from a spoon.
- Tongue movements developing.
- Your baby begins to eat smooth solids and lump free food, e.g. puréed fruit, fromage frais.

Nine months

- Your baby can sit up without support.
- Your baby can manage lumpier foods, e.g. mashed vegetables, stage 2 jars.
- The tongue can move to the sides of the mouth and up and down chewing movement gets stronger.
- Softer / dissolving finger foods can be introduced at this stage, e.g. cheese puffs, rice cakes, etc.

12 months

- Your baby is able to eat chopped family foods and foods to bite and chew, e.g. toast, biscuits, etc.
- Your baby will take liquids from a cup although there may still be some liquid loss.
- Your baby shows interest in feeding themselves.



18–24 months

- Your child has better control of food in their mouth.
- A mature chewing pattern has now developed.
- Your child can eat chopped up normal family meals and can hold and use a spoon independently.
- Your child can use a cup with both hands.

The development of feeding may not always run smoothly. These are some things that may help at meal times:

- Try and make mealtimes a social time by eating together, chatting and being relaxed.
- Avoid too much background noise, e.g. TV and radio.
- Try not to react too strongly to your child either eating or not eating.
- Children's appetites can vary, so don't force them to eat when they no longer wish to.
- Offer small regular meals that your child is more likely to finish.
- Try not to offer big drinks before meals.
- Try to offer some choice of food.
- Involve your child in preparing the food where possible.
- Allow your child to make a mess, it's fun to play with food.
- Try not to take it personally if your child refuses to eat.
- Try to have some time limit for mealtimes, but don't rush slow or fussy eaters.
- Don't use sweet foods as a reward for finishing savoury food. Try giving a reward that is unrelated to food.
- If your child rejects the food don't force them, just remove the food without comment.

