

FEEDING MILESTONES

BIRTH

Oral Motor Skills

- ▶ Your child has several reflexes that are important for eating
- ▶ Sucking is automatic at this stage and your child may often bring their fist to their mouth in preparation for sucking
- ▶ The gag response is observed from birth

Sensory

- ▶ Your child can distinguish between different sweet flavours

2 MONTHS

Oral Motor Skills

- ▶ Your child is starting to open their mouth to suck their fist, especially when hungry
- ▶ Your child can move their tongue in and out, and up and down

Sensory

- ▶ Your child may reject bitter flavours and/or sour flavours, as these are associated with rotten or poisonous foods

2.5 – 3.5 MONTHS

- ▶ Your child is starting to taste flavour differences

4 – 6 MONTHS

Oral Motor Skills

- ▶ Your child is starting hand-to-mouth play, and is increasing reaching skills
- ▶ Your child is starting to reach for a bottle or spoon when hungry and will open his mouth when spoon approaches/touches lips

Sensory

- ▶ A preference for salty foods

6 MONTHS

- ▶ Your child's gag reflex starts to decrease, and his mouth becomes more used to the feel of food
- ▶ Your child is learning to move food from side to side in his mouth

6 – 12 MONTHS

- ▶ Eruption of front teeth

7 – 12 months

- ▶ Your child can now close lips to clear spoon and full lip closure emerges.
- ▶ Your child's tongue starts to move side to side and move foods from side to middle of the tongue
- ▶ Your child can start to chew softer lumps, mash, thicker purees

8 – 10 MONTHS

- ▶ At this stage, you can introduce cup drinking with a variety of cups

8 – 12 MONTHS

- ▶ Your child can bite into harder food once teeth have erupted

12 – 14 MONTHS

- ▶ Your child can grasp a spoon with their whole hand, hold and tip a bottle, hold a cup with two hands

14 – 16 MONTHS

- ▶ Your child is starting to use his tongue to gather up pieces of food, push food into a ball to swallow and chew bigger pieces of soft table food e.g. avocado
- ▶ Your child is starting to eat foods of increasing "hardness"

FEEDING MILESTONES

Continued...

12 MONTHS– 4 YEARS

- ▶ Your child can cope with most textures offered but chewing is not fully mature

2 years

- ▶ Your child can cope with most foods offered as part of a family meal.

RED FLAGS FOR REFERRAL

Behavioural concerns at mealtimes, for example:

- ▶ Avoiding mealtimes, or attempting to leave the area during mealtimes
- ▶ Tantrums in the lead up to, or during mealtimes
- ▶ Consistent refusal of foods
- ▶ Excessive crying or tantrums when presented with new foods
- ▶ Gagging or vomiting when offered new foods
- ▶ Excessive reactions to food on hands or face
- ▶ Having to prepare a separate meal for one child to the rest of the family
- ▶ Only eating whilst watching an electronic device

Oral Motor concerns, for example:

- ▶ Overstuffing the mouth during eating
- ▶ Food falling out of the mouth during eating
- ▶ Coughing or choking whilst eating or drinking
- ▶ Excessive dribbling
- ▶ Difficulties biting and/or chewing foods effectively

Restricted diet, for example:

- ▶ Limited or a decreasing range of foods in their diets
- ▶ Fewer than 20 foods in a child's diet

- ▶ Refusing whole textures or categories of foods, for example only eating soft foods, white foods, purees

If you have concerns regarding your child's eating, please contact your local speech pathologist for further guidance.



REFERENCES

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