



UNDERSTANDING FEEDING AND SUPPORTING FAMILY MEALTIMES

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Who are we?

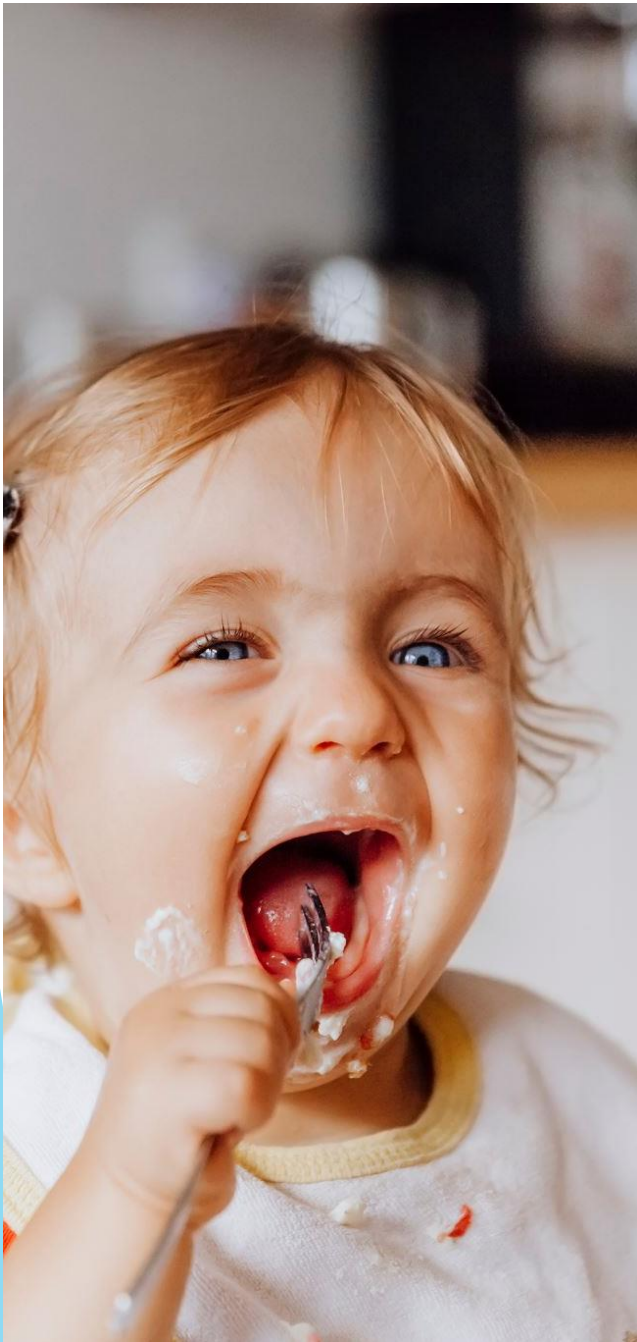
- ▶ Morgan Karkling, Early Intervention Occupational Therapist
- ▶ Karen Chu, Early Intervention Occupational Therapist

Overview

1. Family mealtimes and the roles we play
2. Myths about eating
3. Factors that affect eating
4. Responsive Feeding
5. What else do you need to know?
 - a. Division of Responsibility, Communication, Get Permission
6. Sensory Responses
7. Your Own Sensory Experience
8. Intervention strategies

A photograph of a dining table with several white plates and bowls containing various dishes, including salads, seafood, and vegetables. A hand is visible in the upper left, holding a fork over a bowl of salad. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue geometric shape on the right side. The text "What are the purposes of mealtime?" is centered in white.

What are the purposes of mealtime?



Mealtimes are...

- ▶ Family time
- ▶ For nutrition and nourishment
- ▶ For socialization, celebration
- ▶ For joy - it tastes and feels good
- ▶ Opportunity for exploration of food
- ▶ For skill development

Adapted from Feeding Matters 2023, Marsha Dunn Klein

What does nourishment mean to you?



- For nutrition, growth and health
- About delicious and enjoyable food
- Enjoying the people you are with
- To provide opportunities to learn about eating

What are some myths around feeding?

Mom/Dad/Caregiver caused their child to be this way

He/She will eat when they are hungry

Eating is instinctive/natural

Eating is simple

If a child does not like a food the first time, they will never like it

What do we know about feeding?

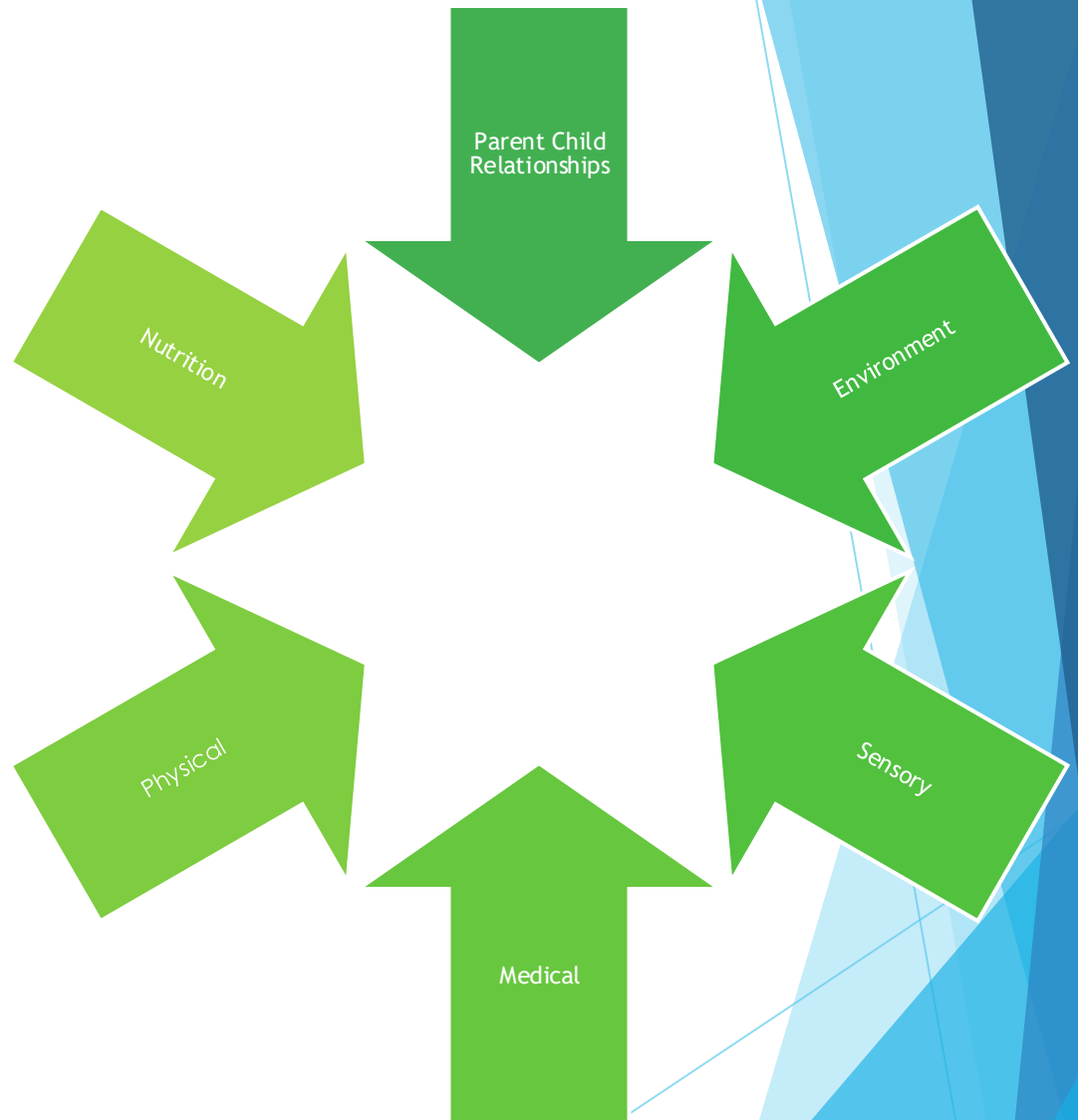
We need to feel safe to eat

Children feed best when they feel well

Feeding is a relationship

Feeding is complex

Factors That Affect Feeding:



Parent Roles

- ▶ **Get Permission Approach:** The adult role is to offer, and the child role is to give "permission", or not. (Marsha Dunn Klein 2019)
- ▶ **Division of Responsibility:** The adult role is to provide the menu, the where and when of the meal. The child role is to determine how much to eat and whether to eat the offered food at all. (Ellyn Satter, 2000)

****It is the adult's job to provide positive opportunities and experiences**



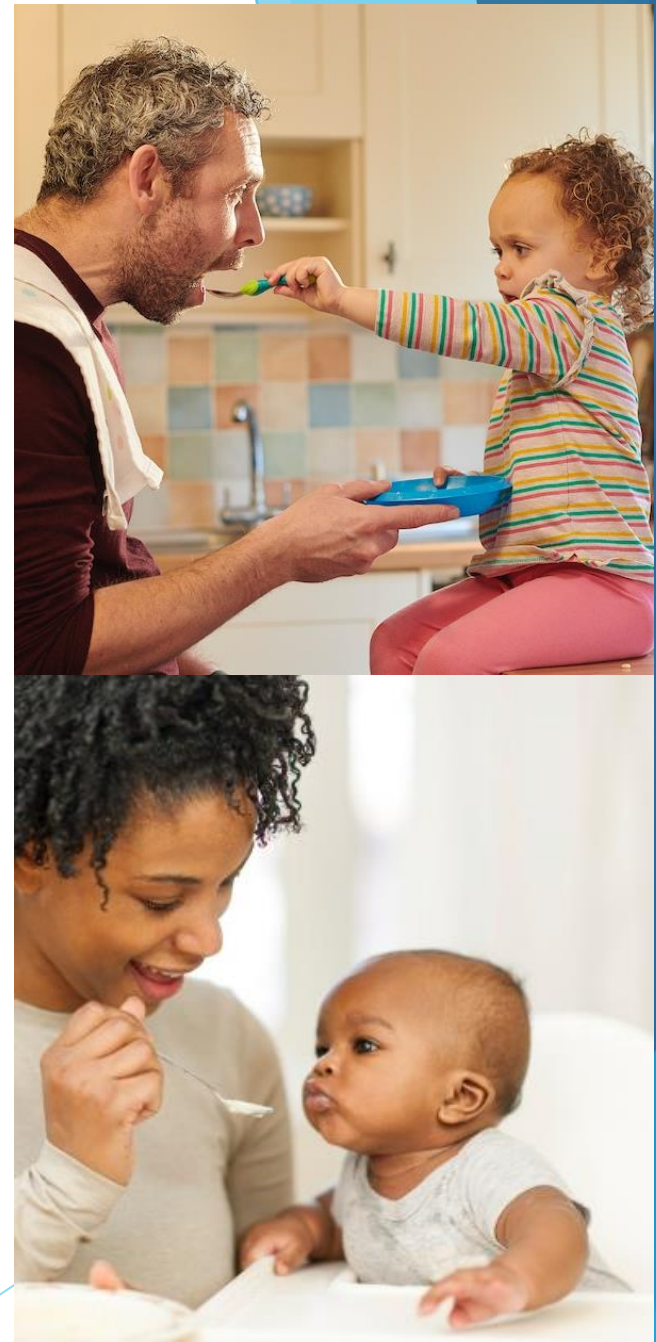
"IT IS NOT OUR ADULT JOB TO GET FOOD IN CHILDREN"
(JENNY MCGLOTHLIN, SLP AND MARSHA DUNN KLEIN, OT)

Feeding Matters 2023

Responsive feeding

- ▶ Mealtimes are a reciprocal communication, at the heart of which is connection, support of autonomy, and a sensitive reading of and responding to cues.

(Feeding Matters 2023)



Responsive Mealtimes are about....

Trust

Togetherness

No pressure

Clear
expectations

Opportunities
rather than
demands

Conversation,
less focus on
food only

Benefits of Responsive Feeding



- ▶ Less family conflict and stress at mealtimes
- ▶ Teaches a child to naturally self-regulate food intake
- ▶ Promotes child's self-feeding skills and overall development
- ▶ Children may learn to eat a wider variety of foods



What else do you need to know?

- ▶ The Division of Responsibility
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Get Permission Approach

The Division of Responsibility

- ▶ The parent is responsible for *what, when, where*
- ▶ The child is responsible for *how much and whether*

(Ellyn Satter)

Parent's Feeding Jobs:

Choose and prepare	Choose and prepare the food
Provide	Provide regular meals and snacks
Make	Make eating times pleasant
Show	Show children what they have to learn about food and mealtime behaviour
Not Let	Not let children graze for food or beverages between meal and snack times
Let	Let children grow up to get bodies that are right for them •(Ellyn Satter)

Communication:

Why would a child say "no"?

- Not feeling well or lack of appetite
- Sensory challenges with food
- Challenges with oral motor skills to handle the food
- Sensory regulation challenges
- Difficulty with appearance of food
- Poor experience history, trauma
- No enjoyment
- Not feeling safe

Re-framing "no"

A child who declines to eat a food is communicating something to us - it is not a behaviour problem that needs to be fixed.



How does it feel to be fed?

- You have no control over:
 - What you are eating
 - How fast you are being fed
 - How much is put on the spoon
 - If you like the food being fed to you



The Get Permission Approach

- ▶ No pressure
- ▶ Connection
- ▶ Internal Motivation
- ▶ Preparation
- ▶ Clear Expectations
- ▶ Opportunity

What senses do we need for eating?



Senses for Eating

Proprioception (awareness of your body in space)	Vestibular (balance)	Visual (sight)
Tactile (touch)	Olfactory (smell)	Auditory (hearing)
	Gustatory (taste)	



Sensory Preferences and Regulation



Proprioception
(awareness of
your body in
space)

Vestibular
(balance)

Visual (sight)

Tactile (touch)

Olfactory
(smell)

Auditory
(hearing)

Gustatory
(taste)



What is your
child's overall
sensory state
when they
come to
mealtimes?



Your Own Sensory Experience

Think about your own sensory preferences

- Cold vs hot
- Mushy vs crunchy
- Mild vs spicy
- Sweet vs salty

Now think about a food that you don't necessarily enjoy or like.

- Is it the smell? The taste?
The texture? The colour?

Comparing sensory properties of foods



Intervention Strategies

1. Food exposures
2. Environment
 - 2a. Posture support
 - 2b. Distractions (e.g. TV, iPad, toys)
 - 2c. Place for eating
3. Scheduled mealtime
4. Consistent mealtime routine
 - 4a. Preparation
 - 4b. Family-style meal
5. Steps to Eating - Food play

1. Food exposures

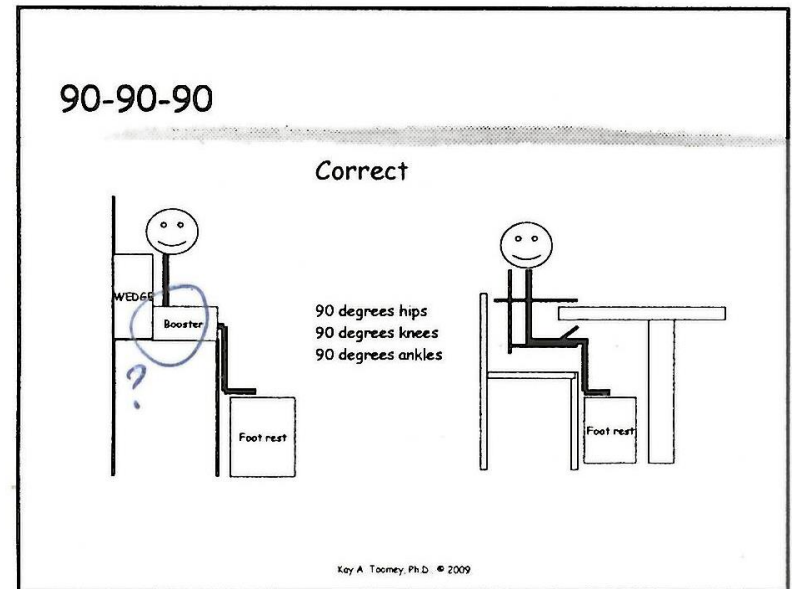
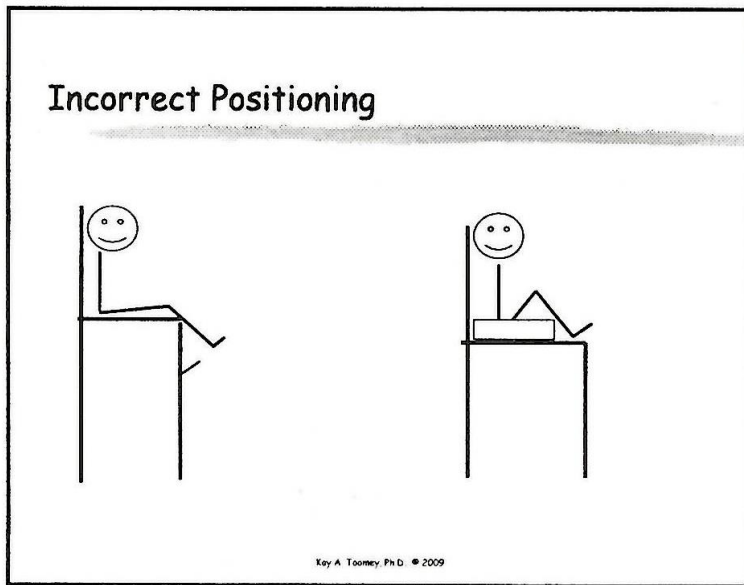
- Participate in food related daily routines, such as
 - Grocery shopping
 - Put milk and cereal in a bowl
 - Open food packages
 - Making fruit smoothies
 - Making food together (stirring, shaping)
 - Read books or watch videos about food
 - Sing songs about food
 - Play with puppets - touching food through puppet

2. Environment

- a. Posture support
- b. Distractions (e.g. TV, iPad, toys)
- c. Consistent place for eating
- d. Sensory aspect of environment

2a. Posture support

► Provide stable seating

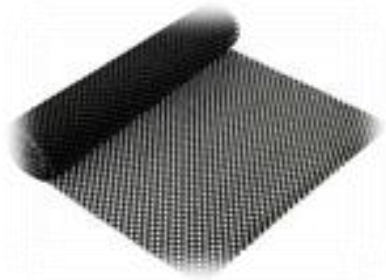


Adjustable wooden Chairs for over 14-16 months



Infant Feeding Chairs 6 months to 14/16 months

Other Posture Supports



No-skid mat on seat of child's chair



Foot rest



Side supports

2b. Distractions



2c. Places to eat



2d. Sensory Aspects of Environment

Is it loud?

Are there a lot of people?

Are there a lot of things around?

3. Scheduled Mealtime

Avoid grazing:

- ▶ Give only water between meals (and planned snacks)
- ▶ Grazing is not only limited to food but also includes liquid calories from milk and juices.
- ▶ How much milk should my child drink? (1 cup = 8oz)
 - 18-24 months: 2-3 cups of milk per day --> 16-24 oz in total
 - 2-5 years: 2-2.5 cups of milk per day --> 16-20 oz in total



4a. Mealtime Routine - Preparation

- Allow for transition time (warning and/or activity) eg. Sand timer
- Movement or sensory warm-up prior to meals:
 - Heavy work (calming) activities
 - Face wiping routine
 - Tooth brushing routine (without paste) if it's pleasurable

KIDS 7 MINUTE HIIT WORK OUT FOR SELF-REGULATION

Set an interval timer and complete each animal movement for 45 seconds, with 15 seconds of rest in between. Do as many as you can!



FROG JUMPS

Hop, hop, back and forth like a frog



BEAR WALK

Hands & feet on the floor, hips high - walk left and right



GORILLA SHUFFLE

Sink into a low sumo squat, with hands on the floor, shuffle around the room.



STARFISH JUMPS

Jumping jacks as fast as you can, with arms and legs spread wide.



CHEETAH RUN

Run in place, as FAST as you can! Just like the fastest animal in the Sahara.



CRAB CRAWL

Sit and place your palms flat on the floor behind you near your hips. Lift up off the ground and crawl.



ELEPHANT STOMPS

March in place lifting your knees as high as you can and stomping the ground as hard as you can!

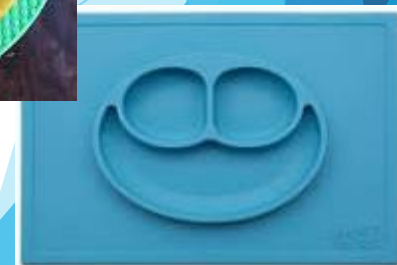
RAISING AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON
[HTTPS://HES-EXTRAORDINARY.COM](https://hes-extraordinary.com)



Proprioceptive Activities

4a. Mealtime Routine - Preparation

- ▶ Consider the place mat, bowls, cups and utensils
- ▶ Think of a positive role for your child to play in mealtime preparation





4b. Mealtime Routine - Family-style meals

- ▶ Family eat together at the table
 - At least 1 preferred food
- ▶ Social modelling
- ▶ Focus on the food, not your child
- ▶ Length of time your child sits at the table (20-30min)
- ▶ Clean up all together

5. The Steps to Eating

(Kay Toomey, Ph.D)



32 STEPS TO EATING

TOLERATES



1. Being in the same room
2. Being at the table with the food on the other side of the table
3. Being at the table with the food ½ way across the table
4. Being at the table with the food just outside of child's space
5. Looks at food when directly in child's space

INTERACTS WITH



6. Assists in preparation/set up with food
7. Uses utensils or a container to stir or pour food/drink for others
8. Uses utensils or container to serve self onto own plate/space
9. Uses utensils/napkin/tool to manipulate food in own space
10. Uses another food to interact with the food

SMELLS



11. Odour in room
12. Odour at table
13. Odour in child's forward space
14. Leans down or picks up to smell

TOUCH



15. One finger tip
16. Fingertips, fingerpads
17. Whole hand
18. Arm, trunk/chest
19. Shoulder, neck
20. Top of head
21. Chin, cheek
22. Nose, underneath nose
23. Lips
24. Teeth
25. Tip of tongue, top of tongue

TASTE



26. Licks lips or teeth, tongue tip taste
27. Full tongue lick
28. Bites off piece & spits out immediately
29. Bites piece, holds in mouth for "x" seconds & spits out
30. Bites piece, chews "x" times & spits out

EATING!



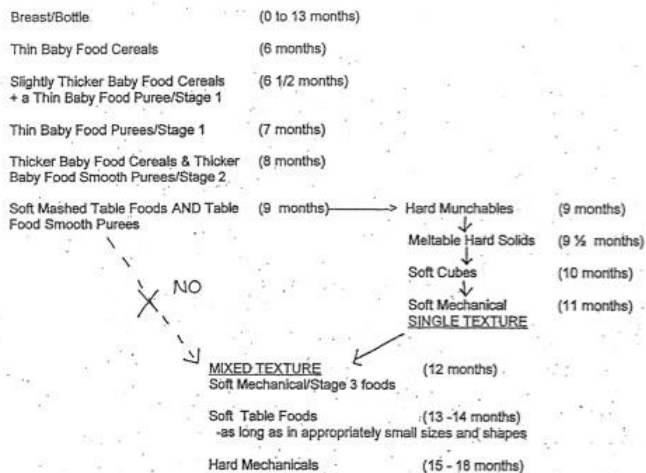
31. Bites & chews, swallows some and spits some
32. Chews and swallows whole bolus independently

Stargold
the
Food
Fairy

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Illustrations by Chris Hamilton

DEVELOPMENTAL FOOD CONTINUUM



Hard Munchables: raw carrot sticks, jicama, celery sticks, baby pretzels, dried fruits, frozen melons in strips, Dutch pretzels, bell pepper strips, bagel strips, frozen pancakes, frozen waffles (licorice, suckers, beef jerky for kids with feeding delays > 12 months old)

(The Goal with Hard Munchables is oral EXPLORATION ONLY; NOT consumption yet)

Melttable Hard Solids: towee crackers, biter biscuits, graham crackers, thawing frozen pancakes, thawing frozen waffles, Oatios, Gerber's cereal squares, Fruit Loops, Captain Crunch, baby cookies, Gaathiya (Cheetos, chocolates, Pringles, popsicles/frozen fruit bars for kids with feeding delays > 12 months old)

(Melttables are foods which will dissolve with spit only; no or minimal pressure needed)

Soft Cubes: avocado, overcooked squashes, kiwi, vegetable soup ingredients without the broth, Gerber Graduates fruits, boiled potatoes, peas, bananas, (ice creams, cheese cubes for kids with feeding delays > 12 months old)

Soft Mechanical Single Texture: fruit breads, muffins, soft small pastas, cubed lunch meats, thin deli meats in small rectangles, soft pasta or soft meat soups without the broth, soft pretzels, barley and scrambled eggs

(Soft Mechanicals are foods that break apart in the mouth very easily)

Soft Mechanical: macaroni and cheese, microwavable children's meals, soft chicken nuggets (not fast food), french fries, spaghetti, lasagna (fish sticks for kids with feeding delays > 12mos)

Hard Mechanicals: Cheerios, thin pretzel sticks, ritz crackers, saltine crackers, most other crackers, cookies, Poptarts, most other chips, Fritos, many other cereals

Developmental Food Continuum

Food play!

- ▶ Grading sensory play
- ▶ Motivating themes
- ▶ Exploring & controlling food interactions
- ▶ No pressure to eat
- ▶ Fun, positive & calm



Playing with food products

- ▶ Textures - easy to difficult = dry to wet
 - ◀ Dry = rice, cookie crumbs, cornmeal, dry sand
 - ◀ Damp = play dough, silly putty, potting soil, damp sand
 - ◀ Wet = finger paint, ketchup, salad dressing

- ▶ Adding other sensations to tactile experiences
 - ▶ Smell - cinnamon in sand
 - ▶ Colour - food colouring in eye droppers with rice
 - ▶ Texture - place wet textures inside sealed Ziploc bags to make squishy bags

Play with Food ideas

- ▶ Cookie cutters, food colouring (eye droppers)
- ▶ Fun utensils (tongs serving spoons, ladles, wooden spoons, toothpicks)
- ▶ Using brushes, utensils or foods like broccoli, carrots, celery, cheese strings to paint with sauces/condiments
- ▶ Stack crackers, cheese and knock them over (with spoon, finger, elbow, tongue)
- ▶ Musical foods: pretzel stick - drumsticks, Veggie straws - horns
- ▶ Sauce/yogurt lipstick, cheese or pretzel mustache.
- ▶ Placing food on different parts of the body, jumping in/on/off/out of hands/shoulders/cheeks/chin/mouth
- ▶ Clean up time!

Play with Food ideas Continued

- ▶ Semi-structured play is when you are bringing in some deliberate ideas into the play. (e.g. create scenarios where characters eat)
- ▶ **Symbolic play:** What happens when the doll doesn't want that strong tasting food? Model what you could do - have less, choose another food, mix it with something else, does the doll have any ideas?
- ▶ **Puppet play:**
 - ▶ touch around the face
 - ▶ touching of food through the puppet
- ▶ **Dramatic play:** tea parties, cooking, grocery shopping, BBQ, picnics, restaurant

Food Jags

Rigidity about food presentation

A predictable, self-imposed sensory “safety net”

A need for the same

Easy to promote more rigid food jags

Strategies to Address Food Jags

Make slow changes
(texture last)

Opportunities for
structured
flexibility & choice
making (spit bowl)

Try not to be a
short order cook!

Do not eat the
same food
everyday

Include your child
in the food
preparation &
presentation

Expanding Mealtime Strategies



- ▶ Typically 50+ exposures to a new food before acceptance
 - ▶ Your child may need many more exposures (learning plate)
- ▶ Politely spitting out or touching food is OK
- ▶ It's okay to be messy at a meal.

Summary

- ▶ **Division of Responsibility:** The adult role is to provide the menu, the where and when of the meal. The child role is to determine how much to eat and whether to eat the offered food at all. (Ellyn Satter, 2000)
- ▶ **Get Permission Approach:**
 - ▶ No pressure
 - ▶ Connection
 - ▶ Internal Motivation
 - ▶ Preparation
 - ▶ Clear Expectations
 - ▶ Opportunity(Marsha Dunn Klein, OT)

Summary continued

1. Food exposures
2. Environment
 - 2a. Posture support
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Thank you!



Helpful Resources

- ▶ Free parent workshop from Get Permission Institute: <https://course.getpermissioninstitute.com/order?ct=762e991f-6da7-49c2-b492-29a43aea5ca2>
- ▶ Fraser Health Family Meals: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/age-and-stage/infants-children-and-youth/making-family-meals>
- ▶ Ellyn Satter, Division of Responsibility: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/age-and-stage/infants-children-and-youth/making-family-meals>
- ▶ Dial a Dietitian - 8-1-1 Fraser Health
- ▶ Alberta Health Services: <https://peas.albertahealthservices.ca/page/10108/Oral-Feeding>

Helpful Resources

- ▶ Caring for Kids:
https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/healthy-living/when_your_child_is_a_picky_eater
- ▶ American Academy of Pediatrics - Responsive Feeding: https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP-Responsive-Feeding_Print-Fact-Sheet.pdf
- ▶ Chicago Feeding Group: <https://chicagofeedinggroup.org/what-is-responsive-feeding/>
- ▶ Feeding Matters: <https://www.feedingmatters.org/family-support-resources/>