

Introducing New Foods to Your Child

Introducing new foods is an exciting time for you and your child. Your child will gradually accept new foods with different tastes, textures and temperatures. This journey takes patience as some children may take a long time to accept new foods. The gentle approach on page 2 follows your child's cues and lets them explore a new food before eating their first spoonful. This allows your child to be in control and set their own pace for trying new foods.

- Messy eating is okay! To make clean up easier, place a shower curtain, towel or sheet on the floor and wipe-up after the meal.
- Watch for signs of food allergy when trying new foods.

Relationship

- Coming together at mealtimes lets families eat, connect and build relationships with each other.
- Avoid using distractors (i.e. toys, screens) or bribes (making promises of playtime, screen time or other activities) to encourage tasting or eating.
- Notice how you feel: are you calm, happy, excited, anxious, rushed, sad or angry? How does your child feel at mealtime? Are they awake, alert, calm, and interested?
- Your child will sense and react to how you feel. Think of what you can do before a meal to be emotionally ready.
- Watch for and respond to your child's hunger and fullness cues.
- Respect your child's response: it's okay if they decide not to taste or eat a new food.



Your child can safely taste solid foods when they:

- have head control
- are able to sit independently or with support
- show interest in solid foods
- do not choke while eating or drinking

Parent's Role

- set a routine for when and where you offer food
- choose what foods to offer

Baby's Role

- decide if they will eat
- decide how much they will eat

Environment and Routine

- Eat together as a family whenever possible. Aim to create an enjoyable and pleasant setting for your meals. Try not to watch TV or look at other screens.
- Try introducing new foods in a familiar environment, like your own home.
- Try to set up a routine of 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day. Aim for up to 30 minutes for meals, and 15 minutes for snacks.
- Say to your child: "It's time for snack, let's clean up the toys." or "Let's go to the table." This lets your child know that a change in activity is coming and helps them get ready to eat.
- Try first tastes at the start of a snack time in a familiar place, like your own home. Once the food is accepted, then offer it at meals and other settings.
- When offering a new food, choose a time when you and your child won't feel rushed.

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1. Sit

- While eating, make sure your child is safely sitting up in a chair or on the floor.
- If using a chair, ensure their back is supported, and feet are supported on a foot rest.
- Ask your child to stay seated while eating.

2. Look and Smell

- You can place a small amount of the food on their plate or in a separate bowl close to them. This allows your child to smell and see the food.
- Letting your child help you prepare meals also gets them used to different foods and smells. For example, wash vegetables, add ingredients, or put away groceries.

3. Touch with Hands

- Encourage your child to spoon food from the serving bowl to their plate when able.
- Give your child time to touch and explore how the food feels on their fingers and hands.
- Talk about how the food feels: dry, wet, hard, soft, cold, warm, squishy.
- Give your child a washcloth to wipe their own hands and face.

4. Taste

- When ready, your child may lick their fingers, take a small bite or put a small amount of food into their mouth.
- Giving them a spoon or fork helps your child taste the food without touching it.
- It's okay if they look surprised, gag or spit as they are tasting a food for the first time.
- Talk about the food they're eating and its texture, taste or temperature: "*The apple is sweet and crispy.*"
- Try not to ask if the food was yummy or say "*it's good.*"

5. Offer the new food at mealtime

- Encourage self-feeding when possible.
- Let your child choose which spoons, plates or cups they want to try.
- Pair a new food with one that they already eat. For example, if they eat apples, try offering yogurt (a new food) as a dip.
- Have a wet cloth available so your child can clean their hands and face as needed.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at **811**.

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction, or treatment. If you have questions, talk with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.