

FEEDING MILESTONES CHART

EDUCATIONAL HANDOUT

The chart is a general feeding skills milestone for young children from birth to 3 years old. It may be helpful for parents with young children and occupational therapy practitioners who need more resources.

When using the chart, consider:

- The child's motor skill levels to feeding skills.
- Each stage assumes that the prior stages have been met.
- Consult with a physician when introducing new foods for potential allergies.
- The chart was designed to serve as a functional screening tool. It is not an alternative for assessments or reflects strict, standardized research.

Newborn-2 months

Motor Skills

- Semi-upright/cradle positioning when feeding



Feeding Skills

- Coordinated suck-swallow-breathe pattern during breast and bottle feeds
- Latches onto nipple or bottle
- Tongue moves forward or back to suck
- Diet is mostly liquids only
- May discriminate between different levels of sweet flavors, such as breast milk having a sweet flavor
- May reject bitter flavors as it is associated with rotten foods

2-4 months

Motor Skills

- Little neck and head control with improvements each month
- Begins to put their hands on the bottle during feeding
- Uses both their hands and mouths to explore objects



Feeding Skills

- Tongue and jaw move together
- May begin to detect flavor differences, such as increased suckling to new flavors
- May begin to reject sour flavors

4-6 months

Motor Skills

- Sits upright with assistance
- Holds head steady without assistance
- Begins to bring hands to mouth and may be more independent with oral exploration of objects
- Increases reaching skills where may reach for bottle or spoon when hungry
- Turns head towards or away from food
- Spoon feeding introduced if baby could sit with an upright posture and opens mouth for a presented spoon



Feeding Skills

- Tongue begins to move without the lips
- Tongue used to move purees to back of mouth for the swallow
- Lateral (side to side) tongue movements
- More of an automatic suck than voluntary
- Munching (up and down) jaw movements
- Lateral (side to side) jaw movements
- Develops diagonal jaw movements, which is the beginning of a more mature rotary chew
- Opens mouth when spoon approaches or touches the lips
- Uses upper lip to clean a spoon
- Begins to eat smooth, pureed food where there's only single ingredient
- Preference for salty flavors may emerge
- Taste preferences rapidly learned

6-8 months

Motor Skills

- Greater postural stability to be able to maintain an upright posture for independent sitting that can last for more than 3-5 seconds
- Stable head control in sitting where there's no head bobbing
- Transfers food from one hand to the other hand
- Holds bottle in both hands
- Helps adult with spoon



Feeding Skills

- Brings upper lip down to move food off the spoon
- Emerging full lip closure
- Consistent tongue lateralization when foods are presented to the sides of tongue
- Movement of foods from side of mouth to central tongue and back
- Emergence of mature tongue lateralization
- Diagonal rotary movements
- Decline in gag response as the mouth becomes more used to solid foods
- Sucks liquids from cups
- Introduction of lumpy mashed solids
- Introduction of dissolvable finger foods

8-10 months

Motor Skills

- Trunk rotation and shift weight while seated
- Stands while holding onto something
- Beginning to move in and out of positions
- Emergence of voluntary release patterns
- Uses fingers to rake food towards oneself
- Puts finger in mouth to move food and keep it in the mouth



Feeding Skills

- Emergence of circular rotary movements
- Munches softer food
- Can break off pieces of meltable foods with assistance
- Holds and drinks from a bottle sitting a highchair
- Introduction of drinking from different cups
- Transitions to thicker pureed foods and slightly more textured foods where the food is mashed with harder/lumpier solids
- Exhibits strong reaction to new smells and tastes

10-12 months

Motor Skills

- Independent sitting in a variety of positions
- Develops pincer grasp
- Pokes food with index finger
- Uses fingers to self-feed soft, chopped foods
- May begin to learn how to use eating utensils (spoons or forks) during mealtimes



Feeding Skills

- Weans off bottle feeding at approximately 12 months of age
- Introduction to using an open cup
- Can drink from a straw
- Begins to lick food off lips
- Simple tongue protrusion
- Sustained, controlled biting of food
- Full movements of foods from side to side in mouth with tongue
- Emergence of rotary movements
- Enjoys a variety of smells and tastes
- Ready to try eating a variety of foods, such as soft-cooked vegetables, soft fruits, and finger foods

1 year-1.5 years

Motor Skills

- Pulls self to standing position
- Gets into a sit position without help
- Holds spoon with whole hand for self-feeding



Feeding Skills

- Chews and swallows firmer foods without choking
- Chews foods that produce juice
- Keeps most bites of food in mouth when chewing
- Tongue tip elevation
- Holds cup with both hands to drink
- Parent feeds child some bites and child independently take bites

1.5 years-2 years

Motor Skills

- Self-feed majority of foods
- Practices using eating utensil but not efficient until after 2 years of age
- Can pick up, dip, and bring foods to mouth
- Scoops pureed foods with utensil and brings to mouth



Feeding Skills

- Refined rotary chewing patterns
- Refined lateral placement of foods
- Chews a wide range of textures
- Chews with mouth closed
- Chews bigger pieces of soft table foods
- Improvement in chewing strength where working on hard-to-chew foods
- Uses tongue to gather shattered/small pieces of food
- More control of drinking from a cup

2 years-3 years

Motor Skills

- Wipes own mouth and hands with a napkin
- Begins to serve themselves at the table with some spills
- Pours liquids into cup from a small container with some spills



Feeding Skills

- Improved circulatory jaw movements
- Chews with lips closed
- Uses fingers to fill a spoon
- Improved fork use skill
- Opens cup drinking minimal to no spillage
- Holds cup with one hand
- Eats the same foods as the rest of the family
- Feeds well with utensils
- Has definite food likes and dislikes & refuse certain foods

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