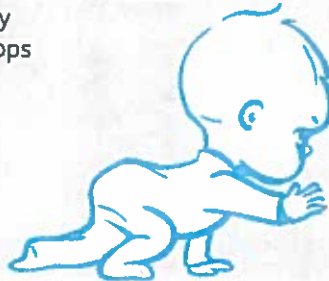




## Stages of Infant Development and Feeding Skills *(healthy, full-term)*

Developmental milestones are used as markers to ensure that infants and toddlers are growing in a healthy direction. During early years, a child's relationship with food is crucial for his or her health and development. Learning the physical stages that relate to feeding is important to understanding this process.

BIRTH - 5 MONTHS	4 - 6 MONTHS	5 - 9 MONTHS	8 - 11 MONTHS	10 - 12 MONTHS
<p><b>Reflexes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suck/swallow</li> <li>• Tongue thrust</li> <li>• Rooting</li> <li>• Gag</li> </ul> <p>Requires head, neck and trunk support</p> <p>Brings hands to mouth around 3 months.</p> <p>Coordinates suck-swallow-breathe while feeding.</p> <p>Moves tongue back and fourth to suck.</p> <p><b>Hunger cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wakes and tosses</li> <li>• Sucks on fist</li> <li>• Fusses or cries</li> </ul> <p><b>Satiety cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seals lips together</li> <li>• Turns head away</li> <li>• Decreases or stops sucking</li> <li>• Falls asleep or spits nipple out</li> </ul>	<p>Gag and tongue thrust reflex starts to disappear.</p> <p>Up and down munching movement.</p> <p>Uses tongue to transfer food from front to back to swallow.</p> <p>Recognizes spoon and opens mouth.</p> <p>Draws in upper and lower lip as spoon is removed from mouth.</p> <p>Good head control and can sit with support.</p> <p>Introduction to pureed and strained foods without choking.</p> <p><b>Hunger cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fusses or cries</li> <li>• Smiles or coos during feeding</li> <li>• Moves head toward spoon</li> </ul> <p><b>Satiety cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turns head away</li> <li>• Decreases or stops sucking</li> <li>• Spits nipple out</li> <li>• Distraction of surrounding</li> </ul>	<p>Begins control of food positioning in mouth.</p> <p>May sit without support.</p> <p>Follows food with eyes.</p> <p>Begins introduction to solid foods (6 months).</p> <p>Drinks small amounts from cup with help.</p> <p>Begins to feed self.</p> <p>Transfers food from one hand to another.</p> <p>Tries to grasp foods such as crackers and teething biscuits.</p> <p><b>Hunger cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaches for spoon or food</li> <li>• Points to food</li> </ul> <p><b>Satiety cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating slows down</li> <li>• Pushes food away or clenches mouth closed</li> </ul>	<p>Moves food side to side in mouth.</p> <p>Begins to use jaw and tongue to mash and chew food in rotating patterns.</p> <p>Begins to curve lips around rim of cup.</p> <p>Sits alone without support.</p> <p>Begins to use fingers to pick up objects (pincer grasp.)</p> <p>Can put food in mouth with hands and feed self finger foods.</p> <p>Begins to eat ground or finely chopped food and small pieces of soft food.</p> <p>Drinks from cup with less spilling.</p> <p><b>Hunger cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaches food</li> <li>• Points to food</li> <li>• Gets excited about food</li> </ul> <p><b>Satiety cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating slows down</li> <li>• Pushes food away</li> </ul>	<p>Rotary chewing.</p> <p>Feeds self easily with fingers.</p> <p>Begins to feed self with spoon.</p> <p>Dips food with spoon rather than scoop.</p> <p>Begins to hold cup with two hands.</p> <p>Drinks from straw.</p> <p>Good hand-eye-mouth coordination.</p> <p>Begins eating chopped food and small pieces of table food.</p> <p>Bites through a variety of textured food.</p> <p><b>Hunger cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses words or sounds for specific foods.</li> </ul> <p><b>Satiety cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shakes head and says, "no."</li> </ul>



Within the first few days of life, an infant has to first learn the coordination of sucking, breathing and swallowing. Next there is learning tongue control and movement that will eventually lead to chewing. With the introduction of complementary foods at around six months, infants learn how to open their mouths in response to food, start learning how to bite soft foods, and how to hold and bring it to their mouths. Every movement from bringing food to mouth, opening mouth, biting, moving tongue to chew food and then swallowing are all learned skills.