

## Major events in the development of feeding skills: 0-18 months

### 0-3 months

- Reflexive “suckle-swallow-breathe” pattern but this diminishes at around 3 months. At this time parents may note baby suddenly “spills” some of feeds.
- Rooting reflex. Strong gag reflex. Automatic phasic bite-release.
- Breast or bottle feed approximately every 3-4 hours (although this varies!).

### 4-6 months

- Reflexive suck replaced by more voluntary control of mouth. Control improves considerably towards 6 months and liquid loss reduces.
- Gag, rooting and phasic bite diminish
- Introduction of solids (recommendation is from 6 months but varies). Will tend to start with “munching” and scraping movements. May gag with new textures
- A spout cup may be introduced: will tend to “suckle”
- Four to six bottle/breast feeds a day.

### 7-9 months

- Liquids still predominantly from breast/bottle, with longer suck-swallow breathe sequences.
- Increasing amounts from spout cup. Some liquid loss when cup is taken away. My start some trials with open cup.
- Smooth purees usually well established with introduction of lumpy mashed foods. Opens mouth as spoon approaches.
- Bite and chew on dissolvable solids. Biting on harder solids for finger feeding [e.g. rusks]. May bite and suck till piece comes off.
- Moving towards three solid feeds per day.

### 10-12 months

- May start weaning from breast/bottle feeds (highly variable).
- Increasing amount of liquid through cup drinking and less liquid loss.
- A variety of pureed, mashed and chopped foods are taken. Can eat sandwiches & biscuits. Bite and chew soft solids and crunchy solids. Finely chopped lumps to solids.
- Finger feed soft chunks of ground meats, fruits and vegetables.
- May be able to drink from straw cup.

### 12-24 months

- Increasing range of textures tolerated. Oral-motor control continues to refine with greater repertoire of chewing movements.
- Interest in spoon use starts around 12 months and baby may be able to feed self some solids by 15 months (again, very variable)

Developed by Lisa Findlay 2010 from:

- Alexander R., Boehme R. & Cupps B. (1993). *Normal Development of Functional Motor Skills: The First Year of Life*. Therapy Skill Builders.AZ.
- “Feeding Disorders: Is it Fuzzy or Fussy?” Workshop presented by A. Phillips (OT) and K.Weir (SP). RCH Brisbane. February, 2009.