

Feeding is More Than Just Eating

It's common to have worries about feeding.



"How do I start solids?"
"What should my baby eat?"
"Is my baby eating enough? Too much?"
"Will my baby still sleep OK if they don't eat as much sometimes?"

What's most important is just Being Together

"We're going to have so many meals together (5000 in the first 3 years!) It's a special time for us to CONNECT and enjoy each other."

"I love to be included in family mealtimes. It makes me feel BIG and like I'm part of the action."



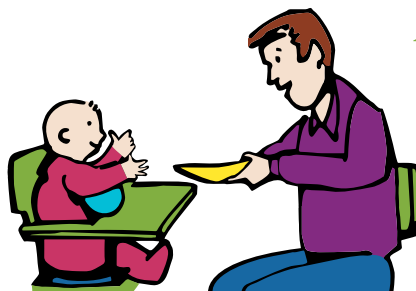
"It looks like you're done"

It's a time to learn about me and follow my lead.

"Watch my cues to see when I want more, what I like, when I want to take a little break, and when I am done. My body is good at knowing when I'm hungry and when I'm full, so it's OK to follow my lead."

It's a time to talk and have fun with me.

"I love sitting with you and looking at you when you are feeding me. I like it when you smile and talk with me during our mealtimes."



"Do you like that?"
"These are yummy carrots"

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It's all about Being Together

Eating together with your child will happen thousands of times during their childhood. Because this shared activity is so frequent and predictable, this time together at meals is especially important for your relationship and for your baby's development. Mealtimes are a time to interact, enjoy each other, talk together, and tell stories.

It's a time to learn about your baby and watch their cues

As your baby develops and gains more strength and coordination, they will start to tell you with their cues when they are happy, or want more to eat. They will also tell you when they are bored, frustrated, or done eating. Carefully following your baby's cues helps your baby feel seen and understood and that their communication is **meaningful** to you.

- **Your Baby's Hungry Cues:** fussing, moving their mouth as if they want to eat, watching what others are eating, reaching out as if to want a sip or bite, acting interested or excited for more food.
- **Your Baby's Full Cues:** pushing or pulling away, shaking their head, batting their head, turning away, arching their back, interrupting the feeding to put their fingers in their mouth.

It's a time to talk to your baby and follow their lead. Talking about your baby's cues will help them learn language. Talk is most powerful when it is connected to what they are doing and feeling.



When Your Baby . . .

Then You Can . . .



Reaches out for food	Feed them and say "You're hungry" or "This is yummy"
Looks at you and smiles	Smile back and take a minute to enjoy your time together.
Briefly puts their fingers in their mouth	Stop feeding and say "I think you need a little break". Wait and watch for when they seem interested again.
Turns away from a feeding	Stop feeding and say "It looks like you are all done".
Arches their back	Stop feeding and say "Oh, you really are done".
Plays with their food	Allow them to be a little messy and explore because that's how they learn.

Learning to watch your baby's cues will help you understand when they are full and when they are hungry. Watching their body for cues that they are full and following their lead helps them develop balanced eating patterns and grow in a healthy way. We often say, "Parents get to decide what to offer, your baby decides how much to eat."

Feeding really is so much more than just eating!