Infant & Toddler Forum
Practical advice for healthy eating habits from pregnancy to preschool

Developmental stages in infant & toddler feeding

6–12 months

	6–8 months	8–12 months	Around 12 months
Motor and cognitive development	• Can begin to sit unsupported	• Can start to pick up objects using pincer grasp (with finger and thumb) • Most infants sit without support	• Says first words, specific to situation • Might say the word for a food they often have • Points to things of interest • Can begin to understand that similar looking foods might taste the same
Social interaction	• Begins to show real imitation of other people's behaviour • Prefers a smile to a frown	• Plays 'give and take' games	• Uses others' facial expressions as a cue to change behaviour
Feeding skills	• Can chew softer lumps, mash and soft crumble foods, and keep most of the food in the mouth • Can close the lips to clear the spoon • Learns to move food around the mouth with the tongue, because more solid food is given	• Can bite into foods such as a cracker • Can bite into hard foods such as apple when front teeth have erupted • Begins to feed from spoon without spilling • Begins to drink from closed cup • Most infants can feed themselves with food held in the hand	
Taste, texture and smell preferences	• Can cope with the introduction of lumpy solids • Will try and put liked food in the mouth	• Better acceptance of lumpy foods the earlier these are introduced • Introduction of 'soft chew' foods	• Some infants will be very sensitive to the feel of objects and foods, and dislike foods that are messy or textured. This is an inherited dislike but can be helped with messy play
Signalling hunger, satiety and dislike	• Gag response becomes less frequent, as infant becomes used to textures and tastes	• Will give clear signals of dislike; will close mouth, turn head • Clear interest in self feeding • Points to food they want	• Will say 'no' to foods they dislike or 'more' for foods that they like