More tips on feeding your baby: finger foods, cups, and more

Photo by Vanessa Loring on Pexels.com

Dr. Kardos recalls what a game-changer it was when her twin babies could feed themselves. Although messy, it was much easier than spoon feeding simultaneously two hungry babies. Now that you started your baby on solids using ideas from our last post, let’s move on to tips on cups, finger foods and more. Mealtime will be less chaotic.

Cups and finger foods

Starting at **six months** your child moves towards three solid food meals a day. Babies continue to drink breast milk or formula in between, but you can start teaching them how to use

a cup. Offer a few sips of water, formula or breast milk when they sit down to eat. Use any type of cup, including an open cup. Avoid juice since it contains a lot of sugar and very little nutrition.

By **nine months** your baby will eat three meals a day. Unlike a six-month-old who grabs at objects using their entire fist, a nine-month-old begins to pick up small pieces of food between their finger and thumb. Check out this post on finger foods if you need some examples of nutritious foods to offer.

Health and safety alerts

Have your child sit at a table with a grownup during meals. This is for safety, education, and socialization. You will be there to provide assistance if your child chokes (click here to find a CPR class near you or virtually). Children learn to eat by watching you eat. And finally, you will create a lifelong habit of gathering together for meals.

Avoid choking hazards. Cut table food into bite-sized pieces smaller than a grape, or approximately Cheerio® sized. Avoid raw vegetables, chewy meats, nuts, and hot dogs since these foods never “mush down.”

Offer structured meal times. Grazing on food and drink all day leads to cavities and suppresses appetite.

Other food tips

About fish: Fish is packed with nutrition. But which fish to dish? Salmon and cod are good choices. Avoid the few that may contain mercury such as swordfish and orange roughy. Check this FDA site for a comprehensive list.

Avoid fried foods and highly processed foods. Do not buy “toddler meals” which are high in salt and “fillers.” If the first three ingredients are “flour, water, sugar/corn syrup,” don’t buy it. We are dismayed by the baby-junk food industry that insinuates that “fruit chews,” “yogurt bites” and “cookies” have a place everyone’s diet. Instead, feed your child REAL fruit and ACTUAL yogurt.

The bottom line about feeding your baby

Keep in mind the overall goal: Children should eat because they are hungry, not because they are bored, tired, or because parents want them to eat. Enjoy mealtime with your baby. As Dr. Kardos can attest, these same babies will run through the door after school asking, “What’s for dinner tonight?”

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

© 2025 Two Peds in a Pod®