

# **FOOD FOR THOUGHT!**

## **FEEDING TEXTURE HIERARCHY**

### 1. Solids for Mouthing and Gumming;

No need for teeth, the child 'chews' by pushing the food to the roof of his mouth with his tongue, and moving his jaws up and down.

- Offer lumpy spoon foods such as soft rice, small curd cottage cheese, tofu, mashed fruit, Jello
- Offer finger foods: a-Teething biscuits, Graham crackers and dried toast
  - b- Cooked carrot strips
  - c- Banana strips

DO NOT GIVE FOODS THAT ARE EASY TO CHOKE ON, LIKE HOT DOGS, GRAPES. MEAT STICKS, PEANUTS, RAW CARROTS

DO NOT LEAVE THE CHILD ALONE WHEN HE IS EATING

- Offer a variety of "gumable" foods to try and explore on different occasions
- Show exaggerated chewing mouth movements as your child is trying new foods, and say enthusiastic 'yum' and 'mmm' exclamations.

## 2- Learning to bite food;

At this point controlled, voluntary biting should start to replace the reflexive bite, which is the automatic strong closure of the mouth when the gums are touched.

- Offer foods that require the child take a bite, but which also dissolve easily with 'guming', such as Graham crackers, cooked carrot strips, banana strips and dried hard toast
- Hold one end of the food as the child tries to bite
- Make exaggerated chewing movements for the child to imitate, and express your pleasure with 'yum' and 'mmm' sounds
- Provide soft, flexible soft and hard rubber toys for the child to bite and chew.
- Encourage child to start holding a cracker or piece of toast to feed himself, monitor how much he is biting off. You may also have to help with the hand to mouth movement.
- Place food for your child to bite in the molar area of the mouth, not the center. Alternate jaw sides with each bite.
- Help the child open/close jaw in a controlled movement.
- If the child has a strong bite reflex, help release the bite;
  - a- Loosen your jaw control
  - b- Apply firm pressure on his jaw bone
  - c- Rock him gently to help him relax and decrease his muscle tone

### 3- Learning to chew by 'munching';

Munching involves moving the jaw up and down, while the tongue moves the food around in the mouth.

#### **Check with your pediatrician before offering new foods**

- Gradually offer junior mashed or chopped foods at each meal, so the child can practice chewing and become accustomed to textures:
  - 1-Thickened baby cereals, scrambled eggs
  - 2- Canned, fresh or stewed fruits and vegetables
  - 3-Soft meats: tuna, boneless fish, chopped or shredded turkey, chicken, pork or beef
  - 4-macaroni, rice or other cooked pastas
- Introduce all new foods positively and gradually, one or two bites to start out with is great. Do not bribe, trick or push the child to try a new food. This can help avoid power struggles and feeding problems
- Exaggerate your chewing movements as this will encourage the child's movements
- Offer a chewy strip of food while holding on to one end, placed at the molar (side) area in his mouth, and encourage him to chew; present it in the other side as alternately.

#### 4- Finger feeding;

Fine motor skills and social skills are exercised, as the child tries to pick up and bring the food to his mouth. Socially, he is testing his independence, and learning to participate in mealtimes.

- Offer a variety of bite-sized finger foods, including at least one finger food per meal.
- Examples: cooked whole green beans, lumps of scrambled eggs, chopped or strips of fruit, cooked diced carrots and potatoes, diced chicken, cubes of cheese, dry cereal such as Cheerios, cooked pasta, hard toast.
- Offer a few pieces of finger food at a time. This will help discourage over-stuffing the mouth, or throwing my food to the floor.
- Offer only as much help as needed, let the child be independent
- Encourage the child to pick up food with each hand, to practice both right and left sides.
- Sit with the child during the meal, for fun, company and supervision. Teach the names of the foods, utensils and flavors.

**Have the child help with the language rich food preparation time!**

**Continue to monitor all self feeding activities for safety!**