

When it comes to self feeding, the mind and the capabilities of the baby don't always progress in sync. Often a baby is determined to feed herself, but doesn't yet have the ability to grasp food or spoon, and she ends the meal messy and frustrated.

Self Feeding



Your baby might be ready to help feed herself when she sits with stability in her highchair, can put objects into her mouth, has begun some chewing motions, and perhaps holds breast or bottle in her hands while feeding. Both she and you benefit from her attempts to feed independently. Though the process may be much slower and is definitely messier than your feeding her, the advantages of letting her try are many. She feels good making her fingers, body, and mouth cooperate as she attempts to satisfy her hunger. Feeding herself stimulates all her senses and provides a wonderful learning experience. She will taste and smell the food. She will feel the texture and temperature on her fingers as she reaches, chews, and swallows her food. She will love the click her spoon makes on her dish or on her new teeth. And she will enjoy the bright colors of the squash and peas.

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Transitional Period

At six months, your baby can put objects into her mouth. She explores her world with her mouth, which makes this time perfect to begin some finger foods. She can also sit with little support. By seven months, she may have some teeth and begin to make chewing motions with her mouth. She can hold a small bottle

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At this early stage you can help out by doing a number of things. First, for finger foods, offer those things that she can hold in his palm, like long crackers, or strips of toast, where there is still food sticking out the end for her to bite off of. Second, give your baby one spoon while you feed with the other. For her spoon, use sticky food and load the spoon for her to self feed. Food like thick baby cereal, or mashed fruits and vegetables that have been mixed into mashed potatoes.

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by herself and may even begin to take liquids from a cup with your help.

While she cannot be expected to feed herself all her foods at this stage, she can participate by feeding herself some foods while you prepare the rest of her meal. She can also have finger foods for snacks.

Appropriate finger foods during this period include those that dissolve easily in her mouth, such as the following:

- Small pieces of toast.
- Small pieces of cooked vegetables, such as peas, squash, soft green beans, or broccoli.
- Small pieces of very soft meat, such as fish without bones, chicken, or hamburger.

Newborn Celebration



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- Small pieces of scrambled egg [unless there is a history of allergy].
- Small pieces of ripe bananas, peaches, and pears.
- Small pieces of soft cheese, such as Monterey Jack. Or Colby [unless there is a milk allergy].
- Cheerios or puffed rice.
- Foods you should avoid include those that may cause choking. Do not offer the following during the first year:
 - Any dried fruits, such as apricots, raisins, dates, pineapple, or coconut.
 - Any nuts, such as walnuts or peanuts.
 - Popcorn, potato chips, corn chips, or crackers that do not dissolve well.
 - Hard candy of any kind.
 - Uncooked vegetables, such as carrots or celery.

- Hotdogs and other foods that might be of "windpipe size."

Bath time is an excellent time to teach your baby to drink from a cup. She will enjoy the challenge and you will not need to contend with a mess on the floor, or her clothes. Use a plastic shot glass or a plastic nipple cover as the first cup. The smaller diameter makes it easier for her to manage with her small mouth. You can offer her water, breast milk, formula, or juice from a cup.

If you are bottle feeding your baby may enjoy helping you hold her bottle. Let her participate by pulling the nipple in and out of her mouth and adjusting the angle of the bottle. Avoid putting her to bed with her bottle, though; as she falls asleep, less saliva bathes her teeth and she swallows less often. Some milk may "pool" in her mouth and support the growth of bacteria, which leads to tooth decay.