



Practical help and information
on nutrition and development

PRESS RELEASE

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Families of young children need more support to encourage positive feeding habits, say experts

Families with children under three need better practical support if they are to encourage positive feeding habits from an early age, cautions an influential group of experts on childhood nutrition and development.

The Infant & Toddler Forum (ITF) has welcomed recent government focus on early intervention, highlighting the earliest years as key to positive outcomes in later life. However, if intervention strategies are to tackle the long-term impact of children's poor nutritional and physical health, expert advice that supports families in early years feeding must be a key element.

Dr Atul Singhal, Professor of Paediatric Nutrition at the UCL Institute of Child Health and Chair of the ITF, says: *"Early intervention strategies make up a large part of government plans to tackle health and social inequalities, but practical guidance on how to attain good nutrition and feeding is largely missing.*

"Toddlers' eating habits are hugely influenced at home, and this is the key period when lifelong dietary preferences and eating habits are formed. If we want to see an improvement in health and wellbeing, now and in the future, it's vital that families have easy access to simple, evidence-based advice on what and how to feed toddlers."

Supporting families of young children to develop healthy eating habits will be at the heart of the ITF's 2012 activities, including:

- The development of new practical information on menu planning, meal suggestions and drinks
- The ITF's highly popular annual Study Day for health and child care professionals, which will be titled *'Supporting families of young children to develop healthy eating habits'* and take place on 25th October at the Wellcome Collection Conference Centre, London
- Ongoing work with childcare and health organisations to encourage wider adoption of the ITF's *'Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers'*, an easy-to-use guide on what food to offer, what eating behaviours to encourage and how best to manage mealtimes.

In an exciting new collaboration, this year the ITF will work with 'Families in the Foundation Years', the strategic partnership helping to shape early years and childcare policy, to jointly promote advice for parents and carers.

Sue Robb, Head of Early Years at 4Children, the charity spearheading 'Families in the Foundation Years', says: *"There is a lot of advice about feeding children, but not all of it is evidence-based and not all of it is useful for families. Parents and carers need information that they can understand and that they can trust. The Infant & Toddler Forum provides just this, with free, expert advice that's useful every day."*



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Families of young children need more support to encourage positive feeding habits, say experts CONT/

Visit www.infantandtoddlerforum.org

The ITF supports health and child care professionals, and families, with its free online resources. Practitioners should help to promote the practical guidance that families of young children can rely on to encourage positive feeding habits in the early years. Parents and carers can find simple, expert advice, including tips on day-to-day mealtime management.

ENDS

If you have press office enquiries, please contact Becky Darke on 020 8971 6408 or bdarke@saycomms.co.uk

Notes to editors

1. The Infant & Toddler Forum is an independent group of experts in child health, nutrition and development. The Forum was formed to provide health and childcare professionals with educational resources that translate the evidence base into clear health messages for parents, and to facilitate interaction, learning and the sharing of best practice between healthcare professionals. For over six years the Forum and its partners have strived to raise awareness and promote positive change in the field of toddler nutrition and feeding behaviour.
2. The Infant & Toddler Forum is supported by an educational grant from Danone UK. All resources produced by the Forum represent the independent views of the Forum with whom copyright rests.
3. For more information on the charity 4Children, visit www.4children.org.uk
4. For more information on the 'Families in the Foundation Years' strategic partnership, visit www.foundationyears.org.uk