

Developmental stages in infant & toddler feeding

4-6 months

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Motor and cognitive development

- Holds, mouths and carefully studies objects
- Some imitation of others' actions
- Can begin to sit alone with some support



Social interaction

- Can tell the difference between others' facial expressions of pleasure and disgust
- Some real imitation of others' facial expression
- Will show interest in turn taking interactions, 'I do something you do something'

Feeding skills

- Opens mouth in response to a spoon
- Can move food to the back of the mouth with tongue
- Will move towards the spoon for liked foods
- Complementary foods can be introduced*
- Can cope with pureed and mashed foods
- Some tongue protrusion as spoon feeding skills are learned

Taste, texture and smell preferences

- No preference for bland tastes
- The more variety of tastes offered the better the acceptance of new foods
- Learns to like and accept complementary foods quickly if offered in this period
- Will accept strong tastes if offered frequently
- Shows preference for some foods and dislikes of some tastes, but will usually accept these if offered again in small portions

Signalling hunger, satiety and dislike

- Moves head towards spoon and opens mouth for food
- Turns away from spoon when no longer hungry and keeps mouth shut
- Gags at disliked foods
- Looks at food that others are eating
- Begins to reach for food
- Starts to hold food and bring to the mouth

Appetite regulation

- Will take less milk if having complementary food so only takes what is needed
- Responds to stressful mealtimes by refusing foods



* The Department of Health recommends that infants should first be given foods other than breast milk at around six months of age. The European guideline for the introduction of complementary foods is between four and six months.