"Fun with Feeding"

General Tips & Tricks

1. Your child is unique, do strategies that work for another child may not work for yours.

2. Keep calm (kids know when we are frustrated) and don't rush.

3. If your child is hesitant or nervous about eating during your first attempt to introduce a new food, for example, try talking and playing with them first.

4. Don't force your child to mouth, bite, lick, chew or even taste anything they don't want to. If they as scared, they will refuse to eat and continue to push away the foods they don't like.

5. Let your child know that they don't have to eat anything they don't like. It's OK to spit food out if they want.

6. Establish a routine around feeding times, for example:

   a. Have your child wash their hands with soap and water before eating.

   b. Put pictures of foods you are going to try in the kitchen.

c. Talk about eating – encourage them to chew bite and eat their food thoroughly.

7. Use your imagination!

    a. Talk about different types of food, using all five senses to describe them.

    b. Ask them to touch their food. Blow on it. Kiss it. Make sure that they are willing to do that on their own. If they don't, that's OK.

    c. Playing with food, instead of putting any pressure on children to eat, will help with their feeding problem. Try to see if the children want to play with their cutlery or are interested in using any other item to touch their food.

    d. You can create fun things on the plate to grab the attention of kids. Make a man out of pancakes. Make up a story about a broccoli forest.

    e. Use cookie cutters to cut food into different fun shapes.

    f. Give foods playful names, like "banana boats" or "pretzel light sabers

8. Get creative

    a. Allow your child to help you prepare and serve their food.

    b. Use a divided plate if your kid doesn't like his or her food to be mixed or touched. Try putting one new food in a section of the plate.

    c. giving funny names to the dishes. You should use terms that will get your child excited to eat.

d. Offer lots of dipping options. Take what they like and try dipping it into something new. It can just be a TINY bit.

e. use fancy and shallow spoons that allow your child to try small bites and eat at their own pace.

f. explore the utensils. Using clear and translucent bottles and cups will also hold their attention.

g. Let them eat using their hands, other food such as carrots or anything fun they like.

h. Taste the food yourself to make sure it actually tastes good.

i. If a child won't eat from a bowl, try putting it in a cup OR right on the high chair / clean table. Mix it up.

j. Use spoons that are fairly shallow and easy to remove food from. They should also be smaller rather than bigger so that the spoon is not overloaded with giant sized bites - it's a spoon not a shovel.

k. Try making very small changes to foods that they already accept. Do they like carrots? Try steaming them slightly or presenting them differently. Do they like crackers? Try putting a TINY bit of a mild condiment on it. Try a different brand of the same food, or a different shape. Add a tiny bit of a certain spice. And so forth

l. Try new foods at snack time instead of mealtimes, so there is less pressure to get mealtime calories in.

m. Model by eating the foods yourself (kids often learn through imitating). You can also model on a puppet or stuffed animal.

n. Take breaks between bites. Swallow, count to three, take a sip of water, bite again.

o. Let them feed you and/or mom, grandma, etc.

p. Chew the food yourself to see how many chews are required. Then count it out loud with the child as he/she chews, or chew to a beat / song. This can help set a pace if they're eating too fast. Ideally you want a rhythmic chewing pattern. It can also help make sure they're fully chewing the food.
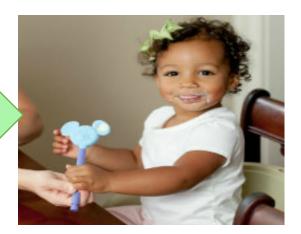
9. Make a Mess!

a. Let kids make a mess of their food. Try not to clean the child's face or hands until the end of the meal

b. Let the child know that they are free to spit out anything they don't like

c. Give them a "no" bowl where they can place unwanted food items

d. let them take food out of their mouths that they can't or don't want to eat.

e. Don't yell at them if they play with food—even if they only lick it and then put it in the "no" bowl.

f. Let them eat at their own pace and reach for the foods they like.

g. If you notice your child has problems swallowing or chewing. Or problems using parts of their mouth or jaw when chewing food you may need to learn helpful techniques to strengthens their muscle and jaw.

10. Give them control where possible by letting them make choices. Let them choose which spoon they want, if they want juice or water, if they'd like to kiss the apple 3 times or lick it once, etc. Two choices are usually best - enough for them to have options without be overwhelmed by them.

11. Use what they already like as a bridge to transition to new foods. If the child likes applesauce, put a little applesauce on a cracker. They might just try that too, or at least lick it off

12. Make sure the feet are stabilized solidly on the ground with the back flat against the back of the chair

Having fun with a Spoon (don't forget fancy or shallow)

1. Try these spoon tricks to get the spoon in your child's mouth:

   - *Lateral presentation* – spoon placed sideways in the mouth and child encouraged to close on the spoon
   - *J scoop* – place spoon on the tongue with slight pressure make a J in the air as the child closes on the spoon (pull out of the mouth and bring spoon upward making a "J" in the air)

2. If a child won't eat with a spoon, use whatever he/she WILL accept. Their fingers, a Grabber, Z-Vibe, Animal Tip, carrot, twizzler, etc. Sometimes something other than a traditional spoon/fork is less threatening.

Anything can be a "spoon"

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