

Feeding Our Youngest

11 Months

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Last month we talked about how your baby is moving toward becoming more independent with wanting to feed himself with a spoon and eat finger foods. He may seem more like a young toddler than a baby in his eating patterns, and this will present new challenges to you, the parent. With a little slicing, chopping, and mashing, table food can make up most of your child's diet by now. He is probably drinking breast milk or formula from a cup with meals, and demanding to join in at family meals, if he is not already included.

When your child eats table food and has started drinking from a cup, he is on his way to weaning, but keep in mind that there are no rules about a "right time" to wean — it's up to baby and mom. Weaning from bottle or breastfeeding is a gradual process and varies in length of time from one child to the next. Again, be sure to follow your child's lead — as her interest in table food and the cup grows, she may lose interest in bottle or breastfeeding, at least at mealtime. Breastfeeding or bottle-feeding may still be baby's choice for between-meal snacks and for late-night and early morning feedings.

One sure sign of your baby's growing up is an increased independence. Your baby will want to feed himself and may resist your efforts to "help." This is not a neat, clean time in your child's feeding experiences, but that is expected and needed for his development. He will learn that meals are pleasant, food tastes good, and that he is a pretty smart person for being able to feed himself. He doesn't know about messy



and naughty habits yet — those are our views of events. So, remind yourself that this stage will pass, prepare an area that is cleanable afterwards, and joining your child for a pleasant meal. Your child will repay your attentiveness to his "requests" by becoming a more reasonable, agreeable toddler.

It is time for a reminder about nutrition. Your baby still is fairly young, and only can hold a small amount of food and liquid at a time, so be sure that food and drink is healthy and nutritious! Sometimes parents or relatives think it is cute to offer baby soda pop, french fries, candy, or rich desserts. Babies are even more attracted to sweets, salt, and sugar than adults are, and their strong liking of sweet, "empty calorie" foods — foods that add calories, but not much else in the way of nutrition — will develop quickly if they are introduced to these foods. So, resist the urge to offer these foods to your child. There will be

plenty of time later for her to discover them. Right now, offer nutritious meals, snacks, and drinks. Fruit, vegetables, grains, and protein foods will taste special to your baby, and you will be doing her (and her teeth) a great favor.

Building Blocks: Thinking about weaning?



- Babies should have breast milk or formula until 1 year of age. However, by age 1 year, babies should be drinking from a cup and not the bottle.
- The decision to stop breastfeeding is an individual matter for mother and baby, so breastfeeding can continue as long as mom and baby want.
- When you are ready to wean from the bottle:
 - Gradually decrease the number of times your child gets a bottle each day.
 - Be consistent. For example, if you have stopped giving your child a bottle at noon, do not “give in” on a bad day.



- Give a fussy baby extra attention (and a drink from a cup) instead of a bottle.
- Do not begin weaning when your child is sick or upset.

Next month we will be looking forward to your baby turning a year old. We will talk about a healthful eating pattern for toddlers as well as child-sized portions.

Enjoy the interaction of feeding your youngest!

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