

Feeding Advances: Starting Soft Solids

Offering soft solids is a good way to make your son/daughter's diet healthier and more diverse. This handout will explain when your son/daughter is ready to try soft solids and provide tips on how to offer soft solids successfully. It will also explain normal behaviors when offering soft solids and when you should ask for help when feeding your son/daughter.

WHEN IS MY SON/DAUGHTER READY TO TRY SOFT SOLIDS?

Your son/daughter is ready to try soft solids when he/she:

- Shows an interest in trying soft solids
- Can actively chew his or her food
- Has been able to successfully chew and eat thicker pureed food and solids that dissolve easily (solids that dissolve quickly when they touch your tongue)

WHICH SOFT SOLIDS ARE BEST TO OFFER?

It's important to offer foods from all major food groups, like proteins, grains, vegetables, fruits and dairy.

You can offer your son/daughter the following foods from each food group:

- **Protein**
Meatballs (turkey, beef or chicken), rotisserie chicken, meat from soup, tofu, soft fish, omelet-style eggs (for consistent texture), egg patty, scrambled eggs
- **Grains**
Whole grain toast, soft-cooked whole wheat pasta shapes, French toast, pancakes, muffins, fruit breads
- **Vegetables**
Avocado slices, baked sweet potato cut into strips, soft-cooked vegetables, like cauliflower, carrots or peas
- **Fruit**
Diced soft fruits, like peaches, mandarin oranges or pears canned in 100% fruit juice
- **Dairy**
Cheese in slices or shredded

HOW CAN I SUCCESSFULLY OFFER SOFT SOLIDS TO MY SON/DAUGHTER?

You can successfully offer pureed food to your son/daughter by following these tips:

- **Join your son/daughter at the table for meal times.**
- **Place food between your son/daughter's gums and back teeth (molars) on one side of his/her mouth.** This will help your son/daughter improve his or her feeding skills.
- **Make sure your son/daughter is taking small bites.**
- **Offer new foods multiple times.** It might take as many as 15 times before your son/daughter shows interest in the food and eats it.

WHAT IS NORMAL BEHAVIOR WHILE MY SON/DAUGHTER TRIES SOFT SOLIDS?

Your son/daughter might show different behaviors while you are offering soft solids. The following behaviors are normal while offering soft solids:

- Playing with food
- Throwing some food on the floor
- Messiness
- Wanting to feed himself or herself
- Mild gagging without vomiting
- Spitting out food

WHEN SHOULD I ASK FOR HELP WHILE OFFERING SOFT SOLIDS?

You should call your son/daughter's pediatrician if he/she shows any of these signs while trying new soft solids:

- Gagging at the sight of food
- Gagging after you show him/her soft solids multiple times
- Coughing or choking while eating
- Needing to be significantly distracted during meal times
- Having trouble chewing
- Not chewing at all
- Irritability (crankiness)
- Gagging and vomiting after trying soft solids with different textures
- Not gaining enough weight
- Signs of an allergic reaction, like unexplained diarrhea or excess mucus in stools, vomiting, rash or hives or trouble breathing

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT FEEDING SOFT SOLIDS TO MY SON/DAUGHTER?

Here is some helpful information about your son/daughter's nutrition while he or she is trying soft solids, like cautions about foods that could make your son/daughter choke:

Choking hazards

There are certain foods that can make your son/daughter choke. You shouldn't give these foods to your son/daughter.

Here is a list of foods that are choking hazards:

- Nuts
- Popcorn
- Hot dogs, whole or cut up
- Grapes
- Hard vegetables and fruit, like raw carrots, raw celery and raw apples
- Cherry tomatoes or grape tomatoes

Did You Know?

Your son/daughter doesn't need juice in his/her diet. He/she can fill up on juice before eating more nutritious foods. It can also cause your son/daughter to have diarrhea, a rash or gain extra weight.

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Down Syndrome Program

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