

Feeding Advances: Starting Solids That Are Harder to Chew

Offering your son/daughter solid foods that are harder to chew is a nutritious way to add healthy foods to his or her diet. It can also help your son/daughter learn to like and want to try new foods. This handout will explain when your son/daughter is ready to try solids that are harder to chew and provide tips on how you can successfully offer solids to your son/daughter. It will also explain normal behaviors while your son/daughter is trying solids and when you should ask for help when offering solids.

WHEN IS MY SON/DAUGHTER READY TO TRY SOLIDS THAT ARE HARDER TO CHEW?

Your son/daughter is ready to try solids that are harder to chew when:

- He or she can successfully chew and swallow soft foods

WHICH SOLIDS ARE BEST TO OFFER?

It's important to offer foods from all major food groups, like proteins, grains, vegetables and fruits. You can also offer food that combines ingredients from these food groups.

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

- **Protein**
Grilled chicken breast, steak, veal, beef, edamame (shelled soy beans)
- **Grains**
Whole grain bread, whole-grain bagels, whole wheat pizza crust
- **Vegetables**
Firm-cooked vegetables, like cooked carrots, green beans or peppers
- **Fruit**
Whole fruits, like apples, pears or melons
- **Mixed foods**
Sandwiches with peanut butter, turkey or grilled cheese

What are solids that are harder to chew?

A **harder to chew solid** is a type of food that is tough, stringy or crunchy. Children need teeth to successfully bite and chew these foods.

HOW CAN I SUCCESSFULLY OFFER MY SON/DAUGHTER SOLIDS THAT ARE HARDER TO CHEW?

You can successfully offer your son/daughter solids that are harder to chew by following these tips:

- **Join your son/daughter at the table during meal and snack times.**
- **Encourage your son/daughter to sit with his/her friends at school during meal and snack times.**
- **Limit the number of small snacks your son/daughter has during the day.** Eating small snacks throughout the day is called grazing.
- **Offer healthy food choices with each meal and for snack time.** You can do this by offering 1 new food item every few days.
- **Offer new foods with 1-2 familiar foods.** This will help your son/daughter come to like the new foods better.
- **Limit distractions during meal and snack times.** This includes not bringing smart phones, tablets or computers to the table and not watching T.V. while eating.
- **Try to make meal times last between 20-30 minutes and snack times about 15 minutes.**

WHAT IS NORMAL BEHAVIOR WHILE I AM OFFERING MY SON/DAUGHTER SOLIDS THAT ARE HARDER TO CHEW?

Your son/daughter might show different behaviors while you are offering solids that are harder to chew. The following behaviors are normal while offering solids that are harder to chew:

- Feeling more or less hungry at different times of the day
- Liking certain foods better than others

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.

WHEN SHOULD I ASK FOR HELP WHILE OFFERING SOLIDS THAT ARE HARDER TO CHEW?

You should call your son/daughter's pediatrician if he/she shows any of these signs while trying solids that are harder to chew:

- Gagging at the sight of food
- Gagging after you show him/her food multiple times
- Needing to be significantly distracted during meal times
- Hiding food in his/her cheeks
- Not gaining enough weight
- Not eating food from an entire food group (fruit, vegetables, protein, dairy or grains)
- Signs of an allergic reaction, like unexplained diarrhea or excess mucus in stools, vomiting, rash or hives or trouble breathing

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Down Syndrome Program

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For more information please call

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