

After starting complementary feeding, parents gradually add new foods to the child's menu. However, they do not change the way they present food accordingly.

Once complementary feeding is started, the child will no longer be breastfed. Therefore, after starting complementary feeding, liquids should be offered to the child in a glass, not in a feeding bottle.

Missing this period, which is special and sensitive for how you serve it up as well as the ingredients, may cause different problems at meal times later. This time, when the parents want to switch from the bottle to the cup, the child will resist.

#### Not "giving" but "serving"!

Often parents think that they give the children the food; however, when we put the food on a plate in front of them so that he/she can reach it, we leave the decision to the child by "serving" the food.

If you don't want any food left on your child's plate, let your baby serve him/herself!

Once your child can hold a spoon, you can guide him/her to help serve food to his own plate.

However, your child, who decides what to eat and how much to eat, also takes the responsibility of finishing the meal.



You can make the utensils your child will use during meals accessible to him/her by allocating a section or shelf of a cupboard that you will reserve for your child in the kitchen. In this way, while you are setting the table, he/she will have the opportunity to participate in your family's routine and take responsibility.

## Why should children feed themselves?

- It's fun for the whole family.
- When you think of a child born to explore, it is a very natural process.
- Discover new foods.
- Learn to eat safely.
- Explore the world while eating.
- Have the opportunity to reach their potential developmentally.
- Support self-confidence.
- Learn to trust food.
- Participate in family meals.
- Appetite control is improved as they decide what to eat and how much to eat.
- Get acquainted with foods of different consistencies and textures and learn to chew.
- Have the opportunity to taste foods one by one separately and have the chance to experience real foods.
- Develop a positive attitude towards food and eating.
- Be eager to sit at the table because it is a process under their control.
- Less picky eaters.
- There is no need for games and tricks during meal times.
- Not excluded during meal times by the rest of family members.
- Eating out becomes easier.
- It costs less because they eat the same with the rest of family.



# Encouraging Feeding Independence for Children

"Help me do it myself"



One of the most important parts of the child's independence process is feeding independence.

Feeding independence is the baby's ability to manage the feeding process from birth: the babies hold the mother's breast whenever they want and let go when they are full. This should be the same for the baby with the start of complementary feeding from the month of 5 - 6: the baby should still control his/her will and this should be supported by the caregivers.

With this process, the responsibility of carrying out the feeding process with solid foods is transferred to the child step by step.

Not missing the sensitive process for independent eating and making the right arrangements will provide the child with a physically and psychologically independent future.

Feeding independence includes processes such as managing your child's own eating process, deciding what to eat and how much to eat, and eating at his/her own pace and on his/her own.



Breast milk, which meets all the needs of the baby from birth, is not enough on its own after the 5th month. During this period, there are signs that indicate that the baby has entered a sensitive period regarding nutrition:

- The baby can sit with little or no support,
- The baby can reach out to grab things,
- The baby puts his/her toys in his/her mouth and gnawing them,
- The baby makes chewing movements.

All these signs and the child's ability to eat solid foods indicate that he is ready to become independent.

The development of eating independence is directly related to the adult giving the child opportunities and providing appropriate conditions.

Parents usually want their children to eat on their own after the age of 3-4.

However, for this to happen, parents should not hold back their child after the sixth month who controls their appetite from the day they are born.



The contact while feeding also changes with the transition to solid food: Whilst the baby has a direct contact with the adult during feeding before transitioning to solid food, now the adult and the child are not in physical contact, but are in direct eye contact, looking face to face.

For this reason, as seen in the image, a chair and a suitable table where the child can sit comfortably and allow his/her feet to touch the ground will be convenient at meal times.



When you switch to complementary food, you can give your baby a piece of bread or fruit that he/she can put to his/her mouth and eat on his/her own. For foods that require the use of a spoon, such as soup or fruit puree, you can feed your baby until he/she can use the spoon him/herself. However, make sure your baby's attention is focused on the food or spoon as you hand him/her the spoon. Because this process will not be a process in which we force the child to eat, but in which we try to help him/her with desire to eat. In addition, always keep your baby's spoon and fork on the table, and give him/her the opportunity to try them each meal. This way you can observe when he/she is ready to eat on his/her own.

The important thing is not whether we sit in front of or next to the child or what we offer for him to eat.

LET'S NOT FORGET THAT EATING TOGETHER SHOULD BE AN ENJOYABLE EVENT!

- Place the food in front of the child where he/she can see it. It is important for him/her to see where the food comes from before he/she starts eating on his/her own and using a spoon and fork.
- Choose a small spoon from which you can serve the appropriate portion.
- When you offer your baby the food with a spoon, wait for him/her to open his/her mouth, never force it. Give him/her the opportunity to focus on eating. Doing this will make your baby feel in control of his/her body. Nothing should enter their mouth without their permission. Feeling that eating is an enjoyable activity will determine their perspective on food later in their life.



It is also important to be careful while preparing the table. You can use a serving napkin that shows which utensil is placed where, so that he/she learns the table rules. This will also be useful after a while when they help you set the table.

NEVER USE THE SPOON YOU OFFER FOR FOOD TO GIVE MEDICATION!  
This can cause the child to develop a negative attitude towards eating.