

Feeding Additional assessment questions

Feeding assessment

1. What routines are there in the family about eating?
2. What food is being offered?
3. How is it offered?

Emotional history

4. What does the mother think about the child feeding?
5. Is the child upset about something, which is putting him off eating?

Feeding history

6. What was the first feeding experience like for the mother and baby? What were subsequent ones like?

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Leaflet for parents Food and drink intake diary

Child's name _____ Dob _____

Please record all solid and liquid food and drinks.

Use a new page for each day.

Day and date _____

Time	Type of food and drink	Consistency, i.e. soft, smooth, lumps, thick, liquid	Amount eaten or drunk, i.e. ½ cup, 2 teaspoons	Comments, i.e. time taken, behaviour, who fed, possetting, vomiting; how did you feel; how did your baby react?

Leaflet for parents

Feeding: a child's perspective

She keeps shoving that spoon in my mouth. I'm going to spit it all out!

Blah! Blah! I'm not eating that muck!

I'll stop crying if she dips my dummy in the sugar.

Look at the lovely pattern I've made with my ketchup.

Why is Mum so upset I haven't eaten anything? I'm not hungry.

If I stick my fingers down my throat
Mum will come running!

If I make a fuss out shopping
she will give me some sweets.

YUCK! YUCK! LUMPS!

Does he expect me to
chew and swallow? I
wish I were still a baby

My brother still has Mummy's
milk and I'm stuck up here
on my own.



NOTE: This leaflet is designed to be used as part of a wider conversation with your practitioner. If you want to take an online course for parents, visit www.inourplace.co.uk.

Feeding: a parent's perspective

The bottle doesn't seem enough anymore – he's a big baby for 10 weeks. I think I should put an extra scoop of milk in the bottle.

She screams if I don't give her a bottle, she just throws the beaker at me.

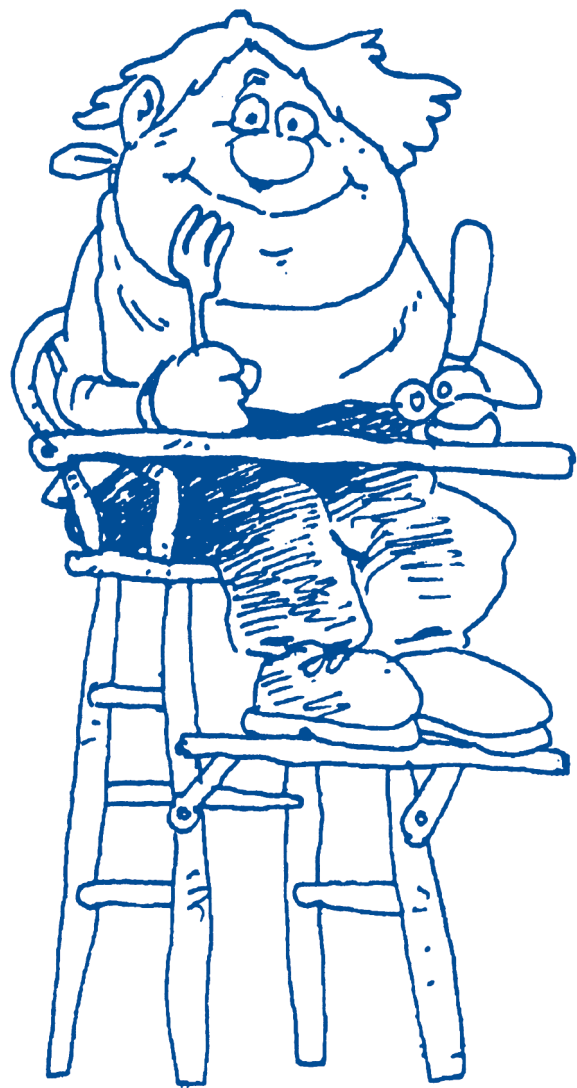
Every time I give him lumpy food he just gags, I don't know if I should go back to puréed food.

He keeps making himself sick and I panic in case he's going to choke.

If I give her the spoon she just makes a mess everywhere.

Nursery says he eats everything they give him, but at home he only eats chocolate biscuits and crisps.

I'm worried he's not eating enough healthy food.



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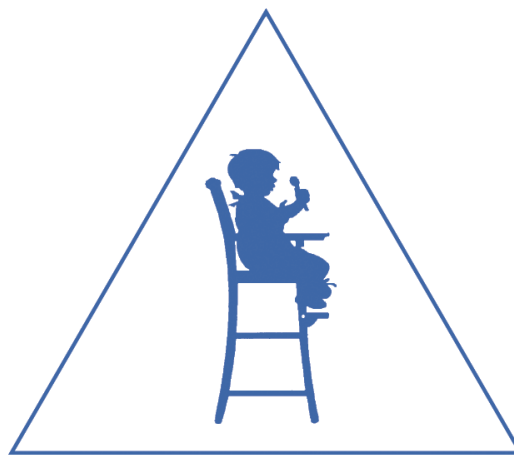
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Leaflet for parents

A useful approach for parents to help your child enjoy food.

Containment

Sharing your feelings with a health visitor
to help reduce stress at mealtimes



Reciprocity

A two-way process
between you and your child
that lets you both feel valued

Behaviour

management
A planned way using hints
and tips to encourage healthier eating

This is a unique guide using the cornerstones of the Solihull Approach to help parents look at eating problems with the family.

Here are some useful ideas to think about when it comes to mealtimes

Tips for toddlers

Eating together regularly as a family can offer your child an enjoyable social experience.

Presentation is important. Colourful plastic plates and cups of contrasting colours.

Adults are conditioned to eat three meals a day. Children will eat when they are hungry.

If your child is clearly not interested after about 20 minutes take the food away without comment. Offer the food again later when your child shows signs of hunger.

Encourage and praise your child even if a small amount is eaten. Do not make a fuss if a small amount of food is left.

Avoid filling up on biscuits and sweets as snacks or drinking too much milk.

Food should never be used as a reward or punishment. For example food used as a bribe may devalue the food you are trying to encourage your child to eat.

Leaflet for parents **Introducing solid food**

Introducing solid food is a big change, from relying solely on baby milk to introducing other foods to your baby. It is a very special time for both parents and child, and not only signals developments in your baby's brain but also a big shift in your relationship with your baby. When babies are small, we have to do everything for them, but as they grow they take many little steps towards independence.

Some parents may welcome their baby moving on from a total reliance on milk, but for others the transition might feel more difficult. It might feel like your baby doesn't need you so much and this could leave you with a mixture of feelings. Just like other big changes, there'll probably be some good days and some more difficult days. Your child will be experiencing new tastes and textures, and is likely to be a bit unsure about it at times. Introducing solid food can sometimes leave you both feeling a bit 'lumpy', just like the new foods you will be introducing! Your health visitor appreciates this is an important time for the whole family and she would be willing to listen to any concerns you might have.

It can feel like there's a lot to think about

It is not unusual to feel anxious about the different aspects of solid food. You might worry that your baby will choke or gag, you might not know which foods to cook, or worry that you'll get this wrong somehow. You might be relieved that your partner will be able to play a more active role in your baby's mealtimes. You might feel that all your friends' babies are starting solids and can't understand why your baby doesn't seem interested. Solid food can seem like a point of pride for some parents, as if it's a pressure and a rush to have their babies on three family meals a day. However, if solid food is not taken at the babies' pace it may result in unhelpful attitudes to food later.

You might feel uncertain or confused about solid food but not really know why you feel this way. This might be a good time to talk to someone understanding, like a friend, family member or health visitor. Solid food can feel difficult because you want to hold on to your precious moments of closeness when you breastfeed, or because you think this might be your last chance to be really close to your baby. You might be thinking about other changes which you are associating with solid food, such as being expected to go back to work or start leaving your baby with a child minder. You might feel OK about these changes but notice your baby

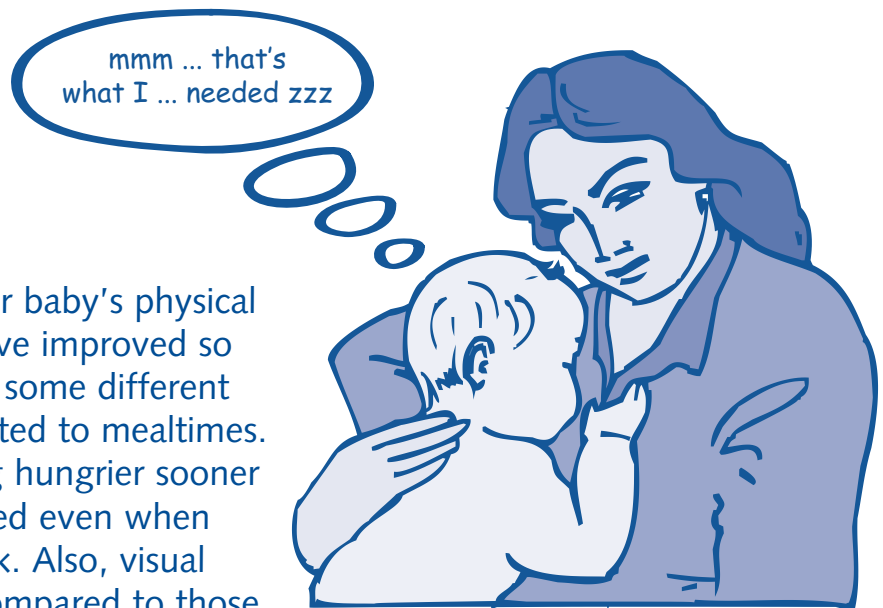
seems reluctant to be introduced to solid food, and so you might be worried whether you're doing the right thing or not. These are all common concerns that many parents can identify with. Whatever your concerns, it's very unlikely that you're the only parent who has ever had these thoughts, and talking about them to someone understanding might just help you find a way to move forward.

There is good news

The good news is that babies come with ways of telling you when they are ready for the next step and what they like. When your baby was first born you might have taken a while to figure out what they wanted and when, but you will have realised that even though they couldn't manage language they were still extremely good at communicating – letting you know when they wanted milk, needed to stop for a break, and also had had enough.

Over the last 6 months your baby's physical and thinking capabilities have improved so you might now be noticing some different behaviours, particularly related to mealtimes. Your baby might be getting hungrier sooner or perhaps is still not satisfied even when they have finished their milk. Also, visual skills are vastly improved compared to those of a newborn. Your baby is able to see the rest of the family eating and may signal that they would like to try some solid food by holding their hand out or trying to grab at food. Different babies will show different signs but some may appear very excited. Some may seem visually fixed on the adult food and some may become a little upset when none comes their way!

The fact that your baby can hold their head up when sat on your lap may also be a sign that they are **physically** more ready for the next stage towards being able to feed themselves. This may all be accompanied by your baby putting their hands into their mouth, feeling their own fingers and tongue. This is a natural stage in their development that helps babies explore how things feel, such as softness or firmness. It also helps a baby carry on judging how to move things around their mouth safely to avoid choking. Putting their hands in their mouth however should not be



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confused with signs of hunger. It is really important to 'listen' to your baby's communications and treat them as the individual they are.

Solid food includes other people too

Eating is an everyday activity that we enjoy through the taste of nice foods and the social interaction that we have with others. Eating with your baby should be no different. Just like all your baby's experiences, mealtimes can also be fun learning opportunities marking an increase in your baby's skill and growing independence. They will really enjoy eating at mealtimes with you and the other members of the family, even if this requires a bit more patience from you; babies do like to grab at other food, make a mess and take their time when they are learning the new skills of solid food.

If we are presented with something we have not tried before we probably approach it in a curious manner, holding it in our mouths and experiencing the texture before swallowing it down. If your baby has always readily accepted milk previously, it can be hard not to feel rejected when they spit out these new tastes. Try to remember that your baby may need several chances at a new food before they can decide if they like it or not. It can be even harder to be relaxed about solid food if you know they'll sleep better if they eat well, or you have been worried about their being poorly recently, or they seem to be spitting a lot out at the moment. Try to keep in your mind that your baby is good at communicating with you, and is asking you to read these signs even though they can't use words.

As you would expect with any important change, there might be times when your baby seems to be finding solid food a bit tricky. For example, your baby will be learning to wait for the next spoonful to be loaded. Your baby might try to go back to relying on bottles or using the breast as a comforter. They will need your help to keep going and not give up. It can feel easier just to give in and go back to milk, even though your baby is clearly giving you signals that they are ready for solid food. This is when another person, such as a friend, relative or health visitor, can help you to keep going in a way that is sensitive to your baby's signals.

Think about how you would want to be fed

The things that are important to us as adults at a mealtime are not that dissimilar to a baby's desires. We like to see our food in front of us. We need to be able to reach it and be in control of what we put in our mouth next. It's nice to eat alongside someone else. We like to be comfortable in order to feel relaxed and enjoy the experience and we like to have enough

time so that it doesn't feel like a race towards indigestion! We also generally stop when we are full up.

wow is this fun!
It tastes yummy and
I can get my hands
in it too!



However we have all had different experiences of mealtimes and it might be worth taking a moment to think about your own experience of food and eating. Would you think of yourself as someone who likes most things and is willing to try new tastes, or do you think your likes are limited. How do you think this might have a bearing on what you give to your baby or indeed how you present food to them? Remember the non-verbal cues we give can be more powerful than what we actually say so it's important to look positive about the food you offer – even if it's something you yourself aren't particularly fond of. Your baby's non-verbal cues are important and so look out for those gestures that mean they want more or that they've had enough. These might be as simple as your baby opening their mouth or looking towards you, turning their head away, clamping their lips together, or even blinking hard.

Trying to see feeding time from your baby's perspective is an important step towards appreciating how they might be feeling in a given situation rather than sticking to your own agenda about how much you feel your baby should be eating at this particular sitting. Your baby will gain so much from knowing you are listening to what they are trying to tell you. Your recognition of your baby's signs to indicate that they have had enough and want to stop now builds a real sense of trust and understanding. Your baby is more likely to enjoy future mealtimes if they feel they have some measure of control about what and how they eat.

can't you see
I've had enough now thanks mum.
You might want me to finish that last
mouthful but I just don't have
any room left



You can find more information about introducing solid food on the NHS Choices website.

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