

Top Tips to Support Your Child's Development

Physical Development: Health and Self Care Skills

Teaching your child to drink from an open cup – activities to support your child to develop the oral motor skills needed for drinking/feeding; including developing an awareness of the inside of their mouth, coordination, movement and strength (of lips, cheeks, tongue).

It is important to consider individual needs including special feeding routines, additional medical needs or other sensory considerations.

It is also important to ensure your child is physically supported at mealtimes; use supportive seating and ensure your child's feet are on the floor/foot rest. This will support your child's stability and upper trunk control, and by doing so will maximise hand-to-mouth coordination. A good time to begin practicing is once your child has developed head and trunk control for sitting and when they have begun to develop the motor skills needed to pick up and grasp/ put down objects.



You may want to ask a Physiotherapist and/or Occupational Therapist for advice and support around positioning or if your child requires specialist seating/equipment. Your child's Speech and Language Therapist will also be able to offer advice around feeding and drinking.

1. Use smaller cups to begin with as these are easier for your child to hold, and also helps to control the flow of liquid.
2. Start by using liquid your child enjoys and will be motivated to drink.
3. Use thicker liquids initially (e.g. yoghurt or pureed fruit), this will help control the flow of liquid and allows your child to feel the sensation of the liquid in their mouth for longer, supporting to develop skills and coordination for swallowing.
4. Use straws to develop oral motor skills and help strengthen muscles needed for swallowing, supporting your child to develop an awareness of their mouth. Use cups with incorporated straws (a variety are available to buy), cut straws shorter or use cartons of juice with straws to practice.
5. Develop oral motor skills outside of mealtimes through activities, e.g. blowing bubbles, blowing paint across paper with straws, using mirrors to practice sounds and mouth movements, place food on your child's lips and model licking it off to develop tongue muscles and control. Taking part in such activities to support oral motor development will support your child to strengthen their muscles needed for drinking, coordinating swallowing as well as supporting their speech development.
6. Use chewy tubes to practice exercises that develop jaw strength. 'Chewy Tubes' are non-food chewable resources designed to develop chewing and biting skills. For more information: www.chewytubes.com/



7. Use musical instruments such as kazoos, whistles, toy flutes, etc. to practice blowing.

8. Use 'Doidy' cups to support your child to learn to drink from a cup first. These are designed so that your child does not need to tip their head back to reach the liquid. They can also be used before hand to mouth coordination has fully developed, with the adult controlling the flow rate. For more information:



www.bickiepegs.com/product/doidy-cup/

9. Model drinking from a cup, give full hand on hand support to begin with and gradually reduce the physical support and prompts needed in 'small steps'; move from hand on hand support to wrist support, guidance by the elbow and so on.

10. Practice drinking using a toy tea set with small amounts of fluid in the cups.