

IDEAS FOR MEALTIMES

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO TRY WITH YOUR CHILD AT HOME TO MAKE MEALTIMES LESS STRESSFUL.

In order to promote regular hunger cycles and increase intake:

- ♥ Place your child on a regular feeding schedule
- ♥ Limit meals to 20-30 minutes
- ♥ Do not allow grazing on liquid or food between meals
- ♥ Position child in a supportive seating system for all meals and snacks

In order to encourage cooperation during meals and acceptance of food:

- ♥ Never force-feed or sneak bites into mouth when it's open to laugh, cry...
- ♥ Keep mealtime interactions fun and pleasant for your child
- ♥ Avoid cleaning face and hands during meals as this can be aversive to children with feeding difficulties
- ♥ Give lots of praise and attention for desired actions (e.g. touching foods, trying to self feed, taking a bite)
- ♥ Use positive statements, not questions (e.g. Say "food stays on the table", "your turn", "you do it", "it's bumpy and white!" instead of, "no throwing", "do you want more?", "can you do it?", "Please?")

In order to promote calmly sitting independently during mealtime:

- ♥ Consider sitting your child in a chair for play. Use toys; as tolerance increases, incorporate utensils, bowls, cups and food
- ♥ Set a time limit for sitting, begin with a short period (e.g. 3 minutes) and increase to 20-30 minutes

In order to facilitate improved oral intake in the future, in light of enteral feedings, consider the following:

- ♥ Place on bolus feeds as much as possible
- ♥ Consider giving bolus feeds over 20-30 minutes
- ♥ Provide your child with positive oral experiences with pleasurable touch, teething, and empty utensils
- ♥ Continue to provide as normal a feeding environment as possible during bolus feeds
 - ♥ Position the same way you would feed orally (in high chair)
 - ♥ Place the pump or tube behind them, out of view
 - ♥ Sit and interact with them as if they were eating orally
 - ♥ Feed in the same location as you would orally (in kitchen or dining room)
 - ♥ Provide oral stimulation and food/smell/taste/experiences as tolerated, in order to teach the association between satiety and food experiences

Use lots of praise when your child takes a bite, touches a new food, or puts it in their mouth. Try not to give attention for those behaviors we do not want continued, such as, turning away or pushing food away.

Encourage your child to participate in mealtime preparation (cooking, serving family members) to provide food education and sensory information regarding non-preferred food items.

Please address issues regarding constipation, reflux, oral hygiene and thickening of liquids with your child's medical team as these are issues which may impact oral feeding.

Compiled by High Hopes Development Center feeding specialists:

Linda Tyson, MA, CCC-SLP

Lori Scott, MS, CCC-SLP, CLC



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