

Learning to Feed Myself

TALKING POINTS

1. Learning to eat without help is an important and much anticipated milestone for babies and toddlers.
2. Here are some readiness signs that your child is ready to start learning to self-feed:
 - Leans forward and opens mouth to show you that it's time for another bite
 - Enjoys touching and playing with food or spilt milk
 - Eagerly reaches for the food or spoon
3. Be prepared...self-feeding is a wonderful time for your child to explore different sensory experiences and that means it will be messy! Place a vinyl tablecloth or shower curtain under the highchair to make clean-up a little bit easier.
4. Let's look at the stages babies go through when learning to self-feed.

HANDLING A BOTTLE OR CUP

Holds a bottle or a sippy cup with handles using both hands

FINGER FEEDING

Holds and mouths large cracker or teething biscuit

Enjoys feeding self "finger foods" that melt in the mouth

Plays with food (pokes peas, smashes bananas); willingly dips fingers into pureed textures, such as mashed potatoes or applesauce, and then brings fingers to the mouth

SPOON FEEDING

Uses spoon as a toy at first (reaches for, holds, bangs, and chews on the spoon)

Dips spoon in food

Brings spoon to the mouth, but may turn spoon over

Scoops food with a spoon with some spilling

After the spoon is mastered, your child will learn to stab small bites of food with a fork



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Playful Fine Motor Activities to Promote Self-Feeding Skills

Use a spoon to scoop pom-poms or marshmallows into a bowl

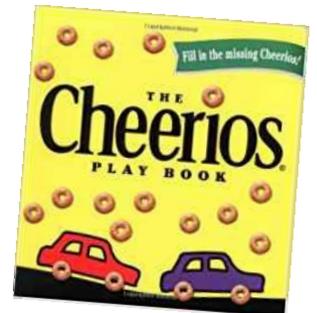
Put small objects into a container with holes

Play with peg boards, shape sorters, bead toys, and peg puzzles

Put Cheerios into *The Cheerios Play Book*

Use scoops and shovels in a sandbox or tub of dry soup beans

Play with play-dough (poke, roll, pinch, knead)



Reference: *Revised Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP)*