



**FEEDING AND SWALLOWING PROGRAM FACTSHEET:
INTRODUCING PUREES AND CHEWABLE SOLID FOODS**

Infants generally begin transitioning to **pureed baby foods** at the same time that they begin to be able to sit in an upright position and bring their hands to their mouth. This is usually at around **4-6 months of age** (4-6 months corrected age for premature infants).

Young infants are fully dependent on their caregivers to help them with feeding. As they mature, they start to learn to feed themselves with more independence, but they still need much help from their caregivers in order to feed efficiently and safely.

Softer food and smaller pieces are easier to eat. When infants are learning how to eat solid foods, their motor skills in both their hands and their mouth are less coordinated than in older children and adults, and so they generally take longer to self-feed and longer to chew foods. It is important for infants to gradually learn to eat a range of food textures. However, it is also important for them to eat enough volume and variety to meet all of their nutritional needs. Therefore, caregivers often need to help infants by boiling, pureeing/ mashing, or cutting up chewable foods into small pieces until infants have developed the hand and oral skills to efficiently manage eating these foods by themselves.

Infants need to be positioned in a supportive baby seat when eating solid foods. Infants need to be sitting upright and their head needs to be supported while they eat, otherwise they are risk of having food go down the wrong way. Also, when infants are in a supportive seat, it is easier for them to bring their hands to their mouth to start self-feeding.

Infants must always be supervised when eating solid foods. Mealtimes are an important parent-child bonding opportunity and allow children to develop their social communication skills. In addition, mealtimes are an important skill-building opportunity. It is important for infants to gradually learn to eat foods that are firmer in texture and learn to feed themselves. However, adult supervision is needed to help the infant to get enough food in, and to provide assistance in case any food goes down the wrong way.

Please see our website for additional factsheets – **Feeding and Swallowing Program**

Please note: Factsheets are not intended to replace professional advice

If you have any concerns about your child's feeding and swallowing skills, please discuss this with your child's physician and contact our scheduling office if you wish to arrange a **clinical feeding evaluation**.

Ph: 617-355-7727 or 781-216-2237

Email: feedingandswallowingscheduling@childrens.harvard.edu