

Tips for helping babies and children take solid foods in the ward environment

To be used only as directed by the Dietetics dept, SALT or Feeding To Thrive service

Sit the child well supported in their high chair

Offer solids first before the naso-gastric feeds if used

Offer small portions. Large portion sizes can intimidate children and put them off. Its better to have less on the plate and for the child to ask for more

Try offering finger foods in big enough pieces that they can pick up easily. Children respond well if they are aware of the texture of the food BEFORE it goes into their mouths. Babies' needs are different from adults and need foods high in calories. Finger foods are often higher in calories

Self feeding is important and enables babies to learn to eat independently and control their own appetites.

Try offering them a spoon of their own.

Offer a little of what they are known to like or similar plus a little of what everyone else is having if appropriate. Melt in the mouth textures may help with an aversion to lumps

Offer a little of new foods. Remember that it may take several tasted before the new food is accepted

Let them play with the food. Learning to eat is also about touching, squishing and getting used to the feel of different textures, being able to lift food to their mouths and experience the smell as well as the taste of foods.

Sit down and eat with them, even if just a little. Eating with the family or other children is ideal. Babies learn by copying others. Show them how to enjoy eating, by smacking your lips, 'mmmmmm'.

Praise them no matter how small the amount is eaten, licked, tasted.

Ignore any undesirable behaviour at mealtimes

Look out for signs that they have had enough to eat and don't offer more

Limit the length of whole mealtimes to 20-30 minutes and then remove the plate without fuss.

Use positive rewards for after the mealtime to motivate the child. For example offering to play together, reading the child a story or going what they want once the mealtime is over. Avoid negative phrasing such as "if you don't eat this you can't have a story"