

Feeding

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association states that "speech-language pathologists play a primary role in the evaluation and treatment of infants, children, and adults with swallowing and feeding disorders" (ASHA, 2002). SLPs are knowledgeable about normal and abnormal anatomy and physiology with respect to respiration, swallowing, and speech. Thus, it is appropriate for SLPs to play a role in feeding.

Age	Milestones
Birth – 4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sucks fingers when near mouth • Places hands on bottle during feeding • Recognizes a nipple or bottle • Pats a bottle with one or both hands
5 – 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds a bottle independently with one or both hands • Mouths and gums solid foods • Opens mouth when a spoon is presented
6 – 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeds self crackers • Drinks from a cup held by an adult – some loss of liquid • Reaches for a spoon when presented/bangs a spoon • Prefers for a parent to feed
9 – 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds a soft cookie in mouth (9 months) and bites through it (12 months) • Imitates stirring with a spoon • Eats lumpy, mashed food • Chews using rotary jaw action (emerging)
12 – 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasps a spoon with a full hand • Brings a full spoon to mouth, turning spoon over en route • Begins to drink through a straw • Holds a cup with two hands • Drinks with four or five consecutive swallows
18 – 24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives up the bottle • Scoops food with a spoon and brings to mouth with spillage • Drinks from a cup with limited spillage • Swallows with lip closure • Self-feeds frequently • Chews a broad range of food • Has precise up/down tongue movement
24 – 36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bites through a variety of food thicknesses • Brings a spoon/fork to mouth, palm up, self-feeds with little spillage • Holds a small, open cup in one hand with little spillage • Chews with lips closed • Chews using stable rotary jaw action

We'd like to thank the following sources from which we obtained information for this section: The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (www.asha.org/policy); Arvedson (2006); and Nicolosi, Harryman, & Kresheck (2006). For more information, please see the full References, Websites, & Resources list on pages 22-24.