# Milestones in Motion

## GUIDING FAMILIES THROUGH FEEDING

Tracking nutrition-related developmental milestones in WIC is important to help families support their child's growth and identify any concerns early on. Discussing nutrition-related developmental milestones with families counts as the nutrition education contact.

The timing of these milestones is relevant for healthy, full-term infants. Premature infants or infants with health issues may develop differently and require advice from doctors.

| AGE | NUTRITION-RELATED MILESTONE |
|---|---|
| by 2 months | Remind families to feed only breast milk or formula at this age. They aren't ready for other foods, water or other drinks for about the first 6 months of life. |
| by 4 months | If hungry, opens mouth when they see breast or bottle. Holds head steady without support when you are holding them. Brings hand to mouth. |
| by 6 months | Puts things in their mouth to explore them and closes lips to show they don't want more food. |

**Advice for WIC Nutritionists:**[1]

After 6 months, it is okay for families to slowly introduce soft foods to their infant. Babies may reject soft foods upon first introduction. It's common for a baby to need 10 or more tries with a food before accepting it — usually spread out over weeks or months.

Signs that a child is ready for soft foods include: [2]

- Sits up alone or with support
- Can control their head and neck
- Opens their mouth when you offer food
- Swallows food rather than pushes it back out onto their chin
- Brings objects to their mouth
- Tries to grasp small objects, such as toys or food
- Transfers food from the front to the back of their tongue to swallow

## by 9 months

Sits without support.

## by 1 year

Drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it and picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food.

## by 15 months

Uses fingers to feed themselves some food.

## by 2 years

Eats with a spoon and holds something in one hand while using the other hand; for example, holding a container and taking the lid off.

Says at least two words together, like, "More milk."

**Advice for WIC Nutritionists:**

Encourage parents to eat meals with their child when possible. Let the child see them enjoying healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and drinking milk or water.

## by 30 months

**Advice for WIC Nutritionists:**

Suggest offering children simple, healthy snack choices and letting them decide, with no more than two or three options.

## by 3 years

Uses a fork.

## by 4 years

Serves themself food or pours water, with adult supervision.

For more information on developmental milestones that you can share with families, visit www.cdc.gov/ActEarly.

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1. https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/healthy-active-living-for-families/infant-food-and-feeding/
2. https://www.cdc.gov/infant-toddler-nutrition/foods-and-drinks/when-what-and-how-to-introduce-solid-foods.html