

Milestones in Motion

GUIDING FAMILIES THROUGH FEEDING 12, 15, & 18 MONTH OLDS



Healthy nutrition supports children's growth and development. In WIC, you can help families connect their child's nutrition and feeding behaviors to developmental milestones for their age. Reviewing a milestone checklist with families can count as a nutrition education contact when you include WIC-appropriate guidance on growth and development.

Tracking and discussing nutrition-related milestones helps families support their child and identify concerns early. Developmental milestones are things most children (75% or more) can do by a certain age. Children develop at their own pace, and those born premature or with medical complexities may reach milestones on a different timeline.

AGE	NUTRITION-RELATED MILESTONE
by <u>1 Year</u>	• Drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it. • Picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food.
by <u>15 Months</u>	• Uses fingers to feed themselves some food.
by <u>18 Months</u>	• Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes. • Feeds themselves with their fingers. • Tries to use a spoon.

Advice for WIC Nutritionists:
Encourage families to offer plenty of opportunities for self-feeding to build fine motor skills and independence.



Activities for Building Feeding Skills

Between 1-2 years of age, most children are ready to eat more solid foods and begin feeding themselves. WIC staff can help families guide this transition and encourage healthy habits that last a lifetime.

- **Move toward family foods.** Offer the same healthy foods the family eats, adjusted for texture and safety. Continue breastfeeding as long as desired and introduce fortified whole milk.
- **Avoid choking hazards.** ([Click here for list](#)). Continue to offer soft, easy-to-chew foods in small pieces.
- **Offer variety.** Provide foods with different tastes and textures; reintroduce foods that were refused.
- **Offer healthy drinks.** Give water, breast milk, or plain milk. If offering juice, limit to 4 oz or less of 100% fruit juice per day and avoid sugary drinks.
- **Encourage self-feeding and utensil skills.** Offer plenty of finger foods and let your child practice using a spoon or open cup and expect spills! Use divided plates to help them scoop or spear soft foods with a small, child-safe fork or spoon.
- **Support hand and fine-motor development.** Play with stacking blocks and small toys to strengthen hand muscles for using utensils.
- **Eat together and keep routines simple.** Sit together for meals and snacks, limit distractions, and let children see you enjoying healthy foods. Consistent routines build connection and security.
- **Offer simple choices.** Let children choose between two options at meal or snacks, such as “Do you want yogurt or apples?” to support independence and decision-making.
- **Let your child help during mealtime.** Invite them to place napkins on the table, stir with a spoon, or add food to their plate. Small tasks build independence, coordination, and interest in eating.
- **Support learning and play.** Talk about foods and name what your child points to, like “banana,” “spoon,” or “cup.” Encourage pretend play, such as “feeding” a stuffed animal, to connect play and mealtime learning.



Advice for WIC Nutritionists:
Model positive mealtime talk: focus on
enjoyment and discovery, not pressure.

For more information on developmental milestones and resources to share with families, visit www.cdc.gov/ActEarly and <https://asphn.org/learn-the-signs-act-early/>.