

Milestones in Motion

GUIDING FAMILIES THROUGH FEEDING 2 & 2.5 YEAR OLDS



Good nutrition fuels healthy growth, brain development, and key milestones. In WIC, you can help families connect their child's nutrition and feeding behaviors to developmental progress. 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 2 Years

- Eats with a spoon.
- 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."



by 2.5 Years

- Uses hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids (like opening snack containers, yogurt lids, etc.)

Advice for WIC Nutritionists:

Celebrate new independence! Ask caregivers how their child is doing with using a spoon or cup.

Activities for Building Feeding Skills

WIC staff can help families connect everyday routines to healthy eating habits. Share these tips to help families encourage healthy eating habits in their toddlers.

- **Reinforce the family's influence.** Children learn by watching! Encourage families to eat together when possible, show enjoyment of healthy foods, and limit distractions and screens (TV, phones, tablets, etc.) during meals.
- **Encourage consistent routines.** Serve meals and snacks at about the same time each day. Consistent schedules help toddlers know what to expect and feel secure.
- **Promote food variety and balance.** Provide a mix of healthy foods from all food groups and avoid choking hazards ([click here for list](#)). Continue to introduce foods in different forms (raw, cooked, chopped, or mashed.)
- **Support responsive feeding.** Let toddlers decide how much to eat. Families choose what foods to offer; the child decides if and how much to eat. This builds trust and self-regulation.
- **Offer simple, healthy choices.** Give two or three options at snack or mealtime, like "Would you like yogurt or banana slices?", to help build independence and decision-making.
- **Encourage mealtime participation.** Toddlers love to help! Let them carry napkins, stir foods, pour water (with help), or set the table. Praise their efforts to build confidence and coordination.
- **Promote fine-motor skill development.** Recommend activities like using child-sized utensils, stacking blocks, or playing with clay to strengthen the hand muscles needed for feeding.
- **Build language during meals.** Talk about foods and describe colors, textures, and tastes, like, "Crunchy orange carrots!" Naming foods helps develop vocabulary and interest in trying new ones.



Advice for WIC Nutritionists:

Share how self-feeding builds confidence and coordination, even when it's messy!

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/>.

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