



Finger foods

Finger feeding is an important step in your child's growth and development. This step teaches your child to eat on their own. Mealtime is more than a time to meet nutritional needs. It is also a learning experience that involves exploring textures, tasting new foods and practicing hand-to-mouth coordination.

Expect a mess when your child is learning to finger feed. You may be tempted to give your child lots of help to make the meal tidier and quicker, but allow your child to practice this new skill on their own. Have a wash cloth nearby to clean up spills and sticky hands after the meal.



From 8 - 12 months of age

Most healthy babies are ready to feed themselves by eight months. You can tell that your baby is ready for finger foods when they are able to sit in the highchair with good stability and pick up things and bring them to their mouth. Start with foods that are large enough for your baby to grab. Choose foods that become soft in the mouth and that can be chewed or gummed easily. Finger foods can be family foods cut up in small pieces. This allows your baby to be a part of family meals.

Examples to try include:

- Dry whole wheat toast
- Unsalted whole grain crackers
- Cooked macaroni, pasta or rice
- O-shaped cereal such as Cheerios[®] or Nutrios[®]
- Cereal biscuits such as Farley Biscuit[®] or Baby Mum Mum[®]
- Pieces of matzo ball
- Ripe banana, peach, kiwi, mango, papaya, melon or avocado
- Unsweetened canned or cooked soft and peeled apple or pear
- Cooked carrot, sweet potato, broccoli or potato
- Grated cheese
- Cooked ground chicken, beef or pork
- Cooked or canned flaked fish
- Cooked or canned beans or lentils
- Chopped hard-cooked egg yolk
- Tofu cubes



An upright, sitting position is the safest place for your child to eat and can help prevent choking. You can sit and eat your meal at the same time. Setting a good example is one of the best ways to teach healthy eating habits.

From 12 - 24 months of age

Toddlers love to be independent. Letting children feed themselves allows them to take control of their eating. Finger feeding is a great way to get a child to eat more variety!

Examples to try include:

- Whole wheat toast cut into fun shapes with a cookie cutter
- Unsalted whole grain crackers
- Pita bread wedges or mini pitas dipped in hummus
- Naan or roti
- Cooked pasta, such as penne or tortellini
- Dry cereal such as Corn Bran[®] or Shreddies[®]
- Mini muffins
- French toast strips
- Pancakes
- Sandwich cut into quarters
- Perogies
- Thin slices of fruit such as apple, pear or avocado
- Raspberries or sliced strawberries
- Mandarin orange sections
- Grapes cut in half, or quarters if large
- Thin strips of soft raw vegetables such as cucumber or tomato, peeled and served with salad dressing
- Cooked vegetables such as broccoli, carrot, potato or cauliflower
- Cheese cubes such as mozzarella, Swiss or cheddar
- Meat cut in cubes or strips (cook in a moist heat such as a pressure cooker or slow cooker for an easy-to-chew texture)
- Small pieces of meat loaf or mini meatballs
- Homemade chicken fingers
- Flaked tuna or fish sticks
- Cooked or canned kidney or white beans
- Pieces of scrambled eggs
- Devilled eggs



Foods that are hard, small and round, smooth and sticky, hard to chew, or do not melt quickly in the mouth, can cause a baby or small child to choke. For information on choking hazards, contact York Region Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 to receive a copy of *Food safety: choking hazards*.