

# Baby self-feeding| Your toddler, the independent eater

By now your toddler is really getting the hang of self-feeding. And you're probably used to messy mealtimes! By now your toddler is really getting the hang of self-feeding. And you're probably used to messy mealtimes! Some things to expect: Now that her hand and finger skills are more developed, she might insist on finger-feeding herself instead of having you help. Be sure to let her. It's great for her self-feeding skills. Your little one might also be ready for more tableware during mealtime. She's making progress on drinking from a cup, and even though she hasn't mastered the spoon yet, she's probably having a good time trying. If she is, you'll likely need to help fill the spoon and get it to her mouth. Remember to encourage her and let her know when she's doing a good job. Steps you can take to help

Not all children are the same, so don't worry if she hasn't mastered all these skills yet. There are still things you can do to support your growing toddler:

- Offer two spoons. You hold one while she holds the other. Show her how you use it, and then watch as she copies you. Or if she tries to grab your spoon, switch with her to let her try with yours instead.
- Keep manageable food on hand. Give your toddler foods that have a size and texture that easily clings to a spoon. To make learning easier for your child, choose foods that are made especially for toddlers learning to feed themselves.
- Be ready with the right utensils. Give your toddler utensils that have big, soft-textured handles that are easy to grip. Also, make sure that forks have blunt prongs. Look for plates with curved sides that make it easy to scoop food. Plates with suction cups on the bottom will keep them in place. Try not to use disposable plastic spoons or forks - they break easily and are choking hazards. They can also have sharp edges that can scratch your toddler.

Practice makes perfect

When your toddler is eating, be patient and let her practice feeding skills rather than jumping in right away to help. Remember to let her know and encourage her when she's done a good job. Imitation is the best form of flattery

Your child wants to be just like you - she's always watching and learning to see what you're doing. Set a good example during mealtime with these tips:

- Include her in the conversation at the table. Eat a good variety of healthy foods in front of your child.
- Use table manners, like saying "please" and "thank you." Your toddler will soon pick them up.