



Eating and drinking is hard work and is not always automatic. Here you will find strategies for progressing from bottle to cup drinking and for progressing from pureed foods to more complex table foods. Preferred food texture levels typically match with the oral motor skill of a child. Offering a few easy to eat foods with one more challenging food is a good way to approach this. Oral motor skills improve by eating more and more complex texture levels.

Drinking:

- Continue breast feeding and offering expressed breast milk as long as you would like.
- Offering a bottle is great, but move towards cup drinking starting at 10-12 months of age
- Goal for cup drinking will be to use an open cup: may briefly need to transition to a soft top sippy cup, followed by a hard top sippy cup, and then using a flat top sippy cup (i.e. Miracle 360).
- Offering a straw cup – a straw delivers the liquid very quickly to the back of the mouth and does not always allow for a controlled swallow. A mature straw drinking pattern will be to use only the lips; many children drink from a straw with it placed further back on the tongue.

Early Oral Motor Skills

Purees:

- Offer these by spoon or long slender teething toy.
- Offer these in midline, wait for lip closure on spoon – do not scrape off on top lip or gum
- Offer to the lateral molar gum surfaces and encourage chewing and tongue movement

Dissolvable Hard Solids:

- These foods melt with saliva and require breakdown with little pressure
- EXAMPLES: Towne House crackers, graham crackers, Ritz crackers, Club cracker, Cheetoh puffs

Soft cubes:

- These foods turn into mush with pressure
- EXAMPLES: avocado, overcooked squashes, kiwi, vegetable soup ingredients without the broth, Gerber graduate fruits and vegetables, boiled potatoes, peas, bananas, berries

More Advanced Oral Motor Skills:

Soft Mechanical:

- Single texture
- Foods that break apart easily in the mouth
- EXAMPLES: toast, fruit breads, muffins, soft small pastas, cubed lunch meats, thin deli meats in small rectangles, soft pasta or soft meat soups without the broth, soft pretzels, scrambled eggs

Soft Mechanical (Mixed Texture)/ Stage 3 Foods:

- Often introduced after Stage 2 foods (7-8 months)
- 1/3 of normal children fail on Stage 3
- EXAMPLES: macaroni and cheese, micro children's meals, soft chicken nuggets, French fries, spaghetti, lasagna

Soft Table Foods:

- Cut appropriately in small sizes and shapes

Hard Mechanicals:

- Foods which shatter when you bite
- EXAMPLES: Cheerios, thin pretzel sticks, saltine crackers, most other crackers and cookies, Poptarts, most chips, Fritos, and many dry cereals

Tough, chewy foods

- Foods which require strength and endurance to chew and grind at molar surfaces
- EXAMPLES: chicken finger, beef jerky, raw vegetables and fruits like apples with skin