



PART 2 | CHAPTER 4

THE TODDLER YEARS: 24-36 MONTHS OLD

*Section 4.1: Important Developmental
Milestones for Feeding: 24-36 Months Old*

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SECTION 4.1: IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES FOR FEEDING: 24-36 MONTHS OLD





THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

During the third year of life (from 24-36 months old) children continue to show steady growth in their development as well as mastery of many skills. During this age range, children will often be referred to as “toddlers.” They are showing increasing physical strength and stability in their bodies, expressing themselves using more words and lengthier phrases, feeling security and comfort in their primary relationships, interacting more with friends, problem-solving dilemmas, playing in more robust ways and enjoying doing many tasks all on their own. Because all areas of development are linked and influenced by one another, it is important to view a child’s development holistically. When working to support children 24-36 months old who may need extra help with feeding, it is critical to consider all areas of development.



For more information about each developmental domain, refer to the Introduction.

EXAMPLE OF A HOLISTIC VIEW OF FEEDING (24-36 MONTHS OLD):

DEVELOPMENTAL AREA	DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES (SKILLS)
 Adaptive	Child receives good rest at night and daily naps.
 Motor Communication Cognitive	Child sits in her mealtime chair and uses words to let her caregiver know she is hungry.
 Social-Emotional Communication Vision	Child smiles and cheers with excitement when she sees her caregiver coming to her chair with food.
 Social-Emotional Communication Hearing	Child responds to her caregiver’s questions during meals (“Do you want more?” “Would you like more water?”) using words and gestures.



Adaptive | Motor | Cognitive |
Social-Emotional | Communication

Child insists on feeding herself using her hands and a spoon and says, “I did it!” when she is successful.



Communication |

Emotional

Cognitive | Social-

Child helps wash her hands and face and she cleans up her spot after mealtimes with support.

Feeding is a complex process and all areas of development are involved. Even when just one area is not working well, it can create challenges for a child and her caregivers. Therefore, it is critical to look at children broadly in all areas to understand their abilities and needs. By understanding these basic milestones of development (also known as “skills”) and how they work together, caregivers can become experts at knowing when development is going well and when there may be a problem. Additionally, because skills are interconnected, it’s a great reminder that there are always opportunities to support every area of development during simple, everyday activities such as mealtimes.



The earlier challenges can be identified, the sooner support can be provided, resulting in happier and healthier children and caregivers.




Remember: Development is a process and there is a large range of times when babies and children gain skills. Caregivers should become familiar with these milestones to best meet the needs of the children they serve.

Toddlers enjoy outside activities together. Play is how children learn and develop strong bodies and minds.



COMMON DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS^{23,24,26}

CHILDREN 24-30 MONTHS OLD

Adaptive: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Drinks from a cup and straw with greater ease ⇒ Feeds self using fingers and utensils with greater ease ⇒ Washes hands and face with support ⇒ Eats most all table foods with mastery – but may show strong preferences for certain foods
Communication: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Responds to simple questions ⇒ Understands different sizes (“big” and “little”) ⇒ Asks for help with personal needs using words ⇒ Puts more words together to say phrases (“I want _____,” “More water, please”)
Fine and Gross Motor: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Throws a ball with some accuracy ⇒ Catches a ball by trapping it against his chest ⇒ Walks and runs longer distances without support ⇒ Creeps backward down steps without support
Cognitive: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Matches objects to corresponding pictures ⇒ Tells own age ⇒ Completes play involving multiple steps such as feed the doll, burp the doll, put the doll to bed, etc. ⇒ Understands the concepts of “one,” “one more” and “all”
Social-Emotional: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Claims certain objects as being her own (“mine”) ⇒ Notices when others are sad, upset or happy ⇒ Avoids common dangers such as fire, knives, stoves, etc. ⇒ Takes turns occasionally when provided support
Vision: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Tries to imitate drawing lines and circles ⇒ Scans an array of pictures ⇒ Watches and repeats actions of other children ⇒ Recognizes familiar adults in pictures
Hearing: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Distinguishes differences in speech sounds with greater ease ⇒ Repeats words and lengthier phrases often ⇒ Uses more speech sounds correctly in words ⇒ Responds to more complex directions with greater ease

COMMON DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS^{23,24,26}

CHILDREN 30-36 MONTHS OLD

Adaptive: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Drinks from a cup and from a straw with mastery ⇒ Feeds self using fingers and utensils with mastery ⇒ Washes hands and face without support ⇒ Cleans up spills and messes with support
Communication: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Responds to multistep directions ⇒ Identifies objects by function (you eat with a ____, you drink from a ____) ⇒ Relates personal experiences through words ⇒ Uses phrases of two or more words
Fine and Gross Motor: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Cuts paper with scissors ⇒ Uses hand to hold paper in place when drawing ⇒ Walks backward at least 10 feet ⇒ Walks up and down stairs with support from a rail, wall or person
Cognitive: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Matches objects by color, size and shape ⇒ Counts to at least five ⇒ Puts graduated sized objects in order such as stacking rings or cups ⇒ States gender (boy or girl)
Social-Emotional: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Transitions between activities with greater ease and less support ⇒ Shows affection toward other children ⇒ Participates in small groups with greater ease ⇒ Shows a growing independence with refusal of help from others
Vision: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Matches objects to pictures ⇒ Matches big and little objects ⇒ Sorts at least four colors ⇒ Finds tiny details in picture books
Hearing: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Distinguishes differences in speech sounds with greater ease ⇒ Repeats words and lengthier phrases often ⇒ Uses more speech sounds correctly in words ⇒ Responds to more complex directions with greater ease



SECTION 4.2: BASIC FEEDING GUIDELINES FOR THE CHILD 24-36 MONTHS OLD

TYPICAL FEEDING DEVELOPMENT

A child's feeding skills are directly related to her entire body's movement and overall development. The "hips and the lips" are connected. How a child holds her body upright in a chair, picks up small pieces of food using her fingers, feeds herself bites of food from a utensil, expresses her daily needs using words and responds to directions and questions from caregivers when preparing for meals are all examples of how the entire body is connected when a child eats. Therefore, if there is a problem in even one area of development, there is a chance feeding development may be disrupted.

When feeding development is going well, a typical progression of skills for a child 24-36 months old can look like this:

AGE IN MONTHS	TYPICAL FEEDING SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT
24-30 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Holding and drinking from a cup with minimal loss of liquid ○ Drinking from a straw with minimal support ○ Using fingers and utensils to feed self with minimal support ○ Eating a variety of food textures with minimal support ○ Chewing foods in a mature manner ○ Taking appropriate amounts of foods/liquids during meals
30-36 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Drinking from a cup with no loss of liquid and without support ○ Drinking from a straw without support ○ Using fingers and utensils to feed self without support ○ Eating most food textures without support ○ Showing mastery of all oral-motor skills for eating and drinking

At this age, children are primarily relying on whole foods for their daily nutrition, and they are expanding the types of foods they are able to eat. Additionally, children continue to take an even larger role in feedings themselves using fingers, cups, straws and utensils. By around 2 years old (24 months), most children have the oral-motor skills necessary to handle all types of solid foods. That's a lot of change in a very short period of time. In order for children to successfully make these transitions, it's essential that caregivers have a general idea of what to expect from children. Also, it's helpful to understand typical development so that caregivers can introduce each transition, such as different textured foods, cup drinking, spoon feeding and straw drinking, in a timely manner to assist children with appropriately advancing their skills.

In the following sections, we will share the different ways to feed children 24-36 months old using cups, straws and utensils.

A group of toddlers sit around a table eating lunch. Eating together helps children learn valuable skills for feeding and healthy relationships.



For more information on types of cups, straws and spoons, refer to Chapter 1 and Appendix 9G.



CUP DRINKING

By 24-36 months old, most children should already be drinking from cups. Typically, by 24 months old, a child should show mastery of cup drinking and be able to manage an open cup, sippy cup and a straw. It is during this time of 24-36 months old that caregivers will continue to support a child's comfort and confidence drinking liquids from cups on a daily basis. If cup drinking opportunities are postponed (after 12 months old) or if a child is provided with limited opportunities to practice, it can make the process of cup drinking much more difficult as well as impact oral-motor skill development.



For more information on cup drinking, refer to Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

STRAW DRINKING³⁰

By 24-36 months old, most children have the capacity to successfully drink from a straw. Children can learn to drink from a straw as early as 9-12 months old. Successful straw drinking is largely based on a child's experience. If a child has many opportunities to practice drinking from a straw, he can easily master this skill at a young age. It is during this time of 24-36 months, that caregivers will continue to support a child's comfort and confidence using straws on a regular basis. If a child is provided with limited opportunities to practice straw drinking, it can make the process of drinking from a straw more difficult later on in the child's life.



For more information on straw drinking, refer to Chapters 1, 3 and 9.

SOLID FOODS

By 24-36 months old, most children should be eating a balanced diet of solid, whole foods. Additionally, they are eating these foods often each day, and they are using their fingers and utensils to feed themselves during meals.

Learning to eat solid foods takes practice. On average, children will master eating solid foods by around 2-3 years old. This means that over time during the 24-36 month period, they will need a decreasing amount of support with the feeding process.



GROWING INDEPENDENCE

As children in this age range are now regularly eating a wider variety of food textures and larger amounts of food at meals, they also show a strong desire to feed themselves using their hands and utensils. Finger feeding and spoon feeding are highly encouraged with young children, as these experiences allow them the chance to explore foods and become comfortable with them prior to tasting and eating them. Don't forget to also provide opportunities for cup drinking.

PICKY EATING⁷

Children 24-36 months old often show increasingly strong food preferences during mealtimes. This is because between 2-3 years old, children have a huge burst in their cognitive (brain) growth, which makes trying new foods stressful and more challenging for their bodies. This can also make mealtimes more difficult for caregivers. Often, children will refuse to try new foods, they will refuse to eat familiar foods that they have previously enjoyed and they will request or want to eat the same foods for long stretches of time. Children this age do have the skills to eat a wide range of food textures; however, they are more selective in their tastes due to their developing brains.

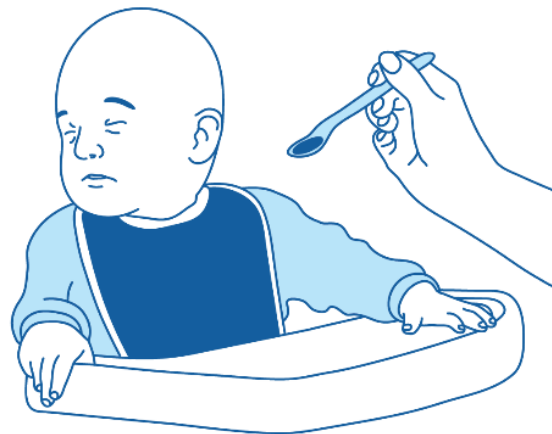


Feeding is a sensory experience. Very often children will taste a food only after they have been given the opportunity to touch it first. Allowing children the chance to explore foods with their hands leads to greater comfort around foods and a stronger readiness to eat them.



Remember: If solid food opportunities are postponed (beyond 6 months) or if a child is provided with few opportunities to practice eating foods and feeding themselves, it can make the process of eating much more difficult as well as impact oral-motor skill development.

It's important to remember that picky eating is a phase, and most children will move out of it.





TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PICKY EATERS

- ① Offer exploration and often. Allow children the opportunity to explore foods (new and familiar) with their hands and utensils. Offer lots of opportunities for food exploration throughout each day. The more a child can touch, smell, see, and experience a food, the more comfortable she will become with tasting it!
- ② Encourage food interaction. Allow children the opportunity to feed themselves. When children feel more in control at mealtimes, they are more open to eating foods. Also, offer children the chance to serve themselves food at meals. When children are able to interact with food in different ways (including serving it to themselves), they become more familiar with foods and more open to eventually eating them.
- ③ Slow, small and familiar. Offer small amounts of new foods at a time to avoid overwhelming a child. More food can be provided once the first serving is finished. Offer new foods alongside familiar foods the child already enjoys. This reduces stress by letting a child see how they have options, including something they're accustomed to.
- ④ Consistency and frequency are key. Consistently offer a child many opportunities to become comfortable with foods at meals. Offer new foods often. When children are able to experience unfamiliar foods often, it reduces their stress and increases their interest and comfort for eating them. Just because a child refuses a food once or twice, does not mean that they don't like it.
- ⑤ Eat together. Eat alongside a child. Children like doing what others are doing, so this is a great way to let them know that foods are safe and nourishing. Allow children the opportunity to eat alongside peers. At this age children learn a great deal from their peers. This means that group mealtimes are a wonderful chance for children to expand what they will eat just by watching their friends.
- ⑥ Learn outside of a mealtime. Have fun experiencing foods in ways other than eating. Look at pictures of foods, play with pretend food, and talk about foods you see in your environment, such as at the local market or in the kitchen.



Children this age must often be exposed to a food 20 or more times before deciding to eat it, so eating new foods can take time and patience.



***Remember:** If a child is showing very strong preferences, they are eating very little at meals and this is happening over a prolonged period of time without improvement, caregivers should consider a referral to a specialist to determine if something bigger is going on. Some diagnoses are more prone to extreme picky eating (also known as “problem eating”) such as autism and children with sensitive sensory systems.*



SIGNS OF PROBLEM FEEDING (EXTREME PICKY EATING)

- ⇒ Child eats less than four different foods or shows a steady reduction in types of foods he will eat
- ⇒ Child shows strong preferences for certain types of foods (only crunchy foods, only warm foods, only orange-colored foods, only sweet foods, only one brand of food, etc.)
- ⇒ Child shows extreme upset when offered certain foods, especially new foods
- ⇒ Child shows strong preferences for eating foods in certain ways (same cup/bowl, foods must be separated and cannot touch, whole and not cut, etc.)



For more information on solid foods, refer to Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

For more information on the anatomy of the spoon, refer to Chapter Appendix 9H.



KEY POINTS FOR THIS AGE

During this exciting time of life, children continue to show big bursts in development, including the types of foods they are capable of eating, and the ways in which they are wanting to actively participate in the mealtime process. As a child's skills continue to mature, caregivers play a large role in supporting a child's interest in enjoying a wider variety of foods and in their advancement of self-feeding skills.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- ① Children this age enjoy being more independent, including feeding themselves. Providing children with lots of opportunities to practice feeding themselves makes them better eaters and helps them feel more confident.
- ② Caregivers should expect that children this age, when given ample opportunity, are capable of completing challenging eating experiences such as chewing more textured foods, using straws and drinking from cups with little to no support.
- ③ Picky eating is very common during this age. Most children will grow out of this, but if they do not, caregivers can offer support by encouraging mealtimes that offer lots of time for children to explore food safely and on their own terms.
- ④ When given opportunity, support and time, most children will grow to have a diverse diet consisting of a variety of nutritious food flavors and textures.



SECTION 4.3: FEEDING POSITIONING FOR THE CHILD 24-36 MONTHS OLD

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDING POSITIONING

The way we position a child during a feeding is very important. Certain positions can make eating and self-feeding much easier for a child, and some positions can make it more challenging and even unsafe.



Good positioning has many benefits for children and caregivers such as:

- ✓ More timely feedings
- ✓ Increased success eating different types of foods
- ✓ Increased intake
- ✓ Increased success with self-feeding
- ✓ Improved growth and nutrition
- ✓ A reduced occurrence of illness and death
- ✓ When positioning is good, children and caregivers are happier, and feedings are a positive experience.

Poor positioning has many risks such as:

- ∅ Inefficient and longer mealtimes
- ∅ Reduced success accepting and managing different foods
- ∅ Reduced intake
- ∅ Increased difficulty with self-feeding
- ∅ Poor growth and nutrition
- ∅ An increased occurrence of illness and death
- ∅ When positioning is poor, feedings can be a stressful, negative experience for children and their caregivers.



BENEFITS AND RISKS OF POSITIONING FOR FEEDING:

BENEFITS OF GOOD POSITIONING	RISKS OF POOR POSITIONING
↑ Efficiency of feedings	↓ Efficiency of feedings
↑ Capacity for successfully taking different textures of foods	↓ Capacity for successfully taking different textures
↑ Intake during feedings	↓ Intake during feedings
↑ Enjoyment of feedings	↓ Enjoyment of feedings
↑ Interest in and capacity for feeding themselves	↓ Interest in and capacity for feeding themselves
↑ Overall growth and nutrition	↓ Overall growth and nutrition
↓ Occurrence of aspiration, illness, death	↑ Occurrence of aspiration, illness, death



This caregiver practices good positioning while feeding this child who needs extra support.



KEY POINTS WHEN CHOOSING A FEEDING POSITION FOR THE CHILD 24-36 MONTHS OLD:



Is the child's head and neck well supported?



Is the child's trunk (body) well supported?



Is the child upright enough?



Does the child need extra support with making feedings slower?



Is the feeder/caregiver comfortable in this position?

Additionally, other areas to consider include:

- ① *What is the size of the child?* A larger child may be more challenging to hold in certain positions. A smaller child may need extra physical supports for sitting upright in a chair such as cushions, pillows and an elevated foot rest.
- ② *How strong is the child?* A weaker child may need a position that offers more support, whereas a stronger child may need a position that requires less.
- ③ *Is the child trying to feed herself?* A child who is not feeding herself may be very capable when given appropriate supports and plenty of opportunities to practice.
- ④ *Does the child appear comfortable in the position?* An uncomfortable child won't eat as well.
- ⑤ *Is the child feeding well in this position or is she fussy?* A fussy child won't eat as well.
- ⑥ *Is the child coughing or choking often in this position?* A coughing or choking child is at risk for poor nutrition, illness and poor feedings.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD AND POOR POSITIONING FOR FEEDING THE CHILD 24-36 MONTHS OLD AGE (IN LAP/HELD BY CAREGIVER)



GOOD POSITIONING

- Child is elevated with head higher than hips
- Head and neck are well supported by caregiver's hand, arm, and chest
- Head is in a neutral and forward position
- Child is tucked close to caregiver's body
- Arms and legs are loose for participating in eating
- Hips are slightly bent
- Spoon is offered in line with child's mouth



POOR POSITIONING

- Child's head and neck are extended too far back
- Hips are not flexed
- Legs are tucked in and do not allow freedom for necessary bending and flexing
- Child looks uncomfortable
- Spoon is presented too high to accommodate child's extended head while also forcing him to extend his head more



Better positioning always leads to better and safer feeding for a child.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD AND POOR POSITIONING FOR FEEDING THE CHILD 24-36 MONTHS OLD (IN CHAIR)



GOOD POSITIONING

- Child is in well-supported chair and upright position
- Head, neck, trunk and shoulders are well supported using chair and tray
- Hips are flexed
- Knees are bent at 90-degree angle
- Feet are well supported on floor
- Tray is accessible for child and appropriate height for child's arms to rest on
- Arms are free for touching foods



POOR POSITIONING

- Child's head and neck are not well supported and they are extended too far back
- Hips are slightly flexed, but sliding down and forward in chair
- Back is slightly arched
- Knees are not bent at 90-degrees
- Feet are falling off of foot rest
- Arms are hanging without support, making touching foods difficult
- Child looks uncomfortable
- Spoon is tilted too high to accommodate child's extended head

BEST POSITIONS FOR CUP DRINKING, FINGER FEEDING AND SPOON FEEDING

As children grow and develop, the position they are fed in may need to change. For example, a 24-month-old child who is sitting in a well-supported high chair, will eventually move to sitting in a child's size chair with a matching table (with less support) as she shows strength and readiness for this transition.



If the current position does not feel right to you or for the child, it's OK to try a different position (and chairs, tables and trays). Sometimes caregivers must try multiple positions until they find the "just right fit."

Listed below are the most common positions used for feeding children 24-36 months old. Many different positions may fit the needs of a single child.



UPRIGHT SEATED FORWARD POSITION (ON LAP OR ON FLOOR)

HOW TO: Place child in a well-supported position (1) seated upright in your lap, or (2) on the floor. Child should be facing you while in your lap or on the floor. Using a tray or table can be helpful for encouraging exploration of foods and self-feeding using fingers, utensils and cups.

BEST FOR: Most children 24-36 months old; spoon feeding, finger feeding, cup drinking, straw drinking.

UPRIGHT SEATED FORWARD POSITION (IN CHILD SEAT/HIGH CHAIR)

HOW TO: Place child in a well-supported position in a child seat or high chair. Child should be facing you and/or peers while seated. You can hold the food, cup and/or spoon, and the child should also be given the opportunity to assist with feeding. Using a tray or table with a seat or chair is helpful for encouraging exploration of foods and self-feeding using fingers, utensils and cups.

BEST FOR: Most children 24-36 months old; spoon feeding, finger feeding, cup drinking, straw drinking.

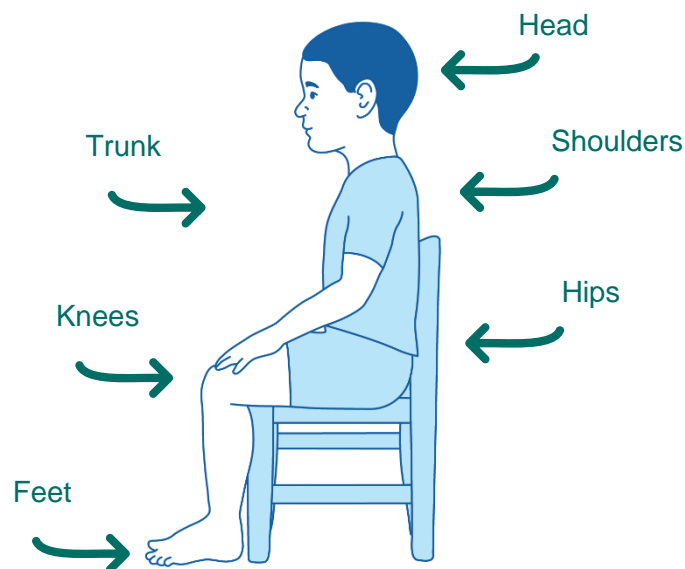




FEEDING POSITIONING CHECKLIST FOR THE CHILD 24-36 MONTHS OLD

AT 24-36 MONTHS A CHILD'S:

- ☐ hips should be positioned at 90-degrees and lower than the head
- ☐ body (trunk) should be upright and well supported by caregiver's body or chair – not leaning forward, backward or to either side
- ☐ shoulders should be level and facing forward
- ☐ head is centered and in midline, neutral position with chin slightly tucked
- ☐ knees should be at a 90-degree angle
- ☐ feet flat on floor, foot rests or against caregiver's body





KEY POINTS FOR THIS AGE

During this age range, mealtimes become a more interactive process for children and caregivers with its own set of challenges, such as picky eating. As children grow older, they begin taking on more responsibilities during mealtimes, such as feeding themselves. They also can become temporarily more selective in the foods they are open to eating. Good positioning remains critical in the success a child has when eating. For mealtimes to be a safe, comfortable time where children can grow their self-feeding skills, they must be positioned properly. Caregivers play a key role in their success.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- ① Good feeding positioning leads to safer eaters, improved oral motor skills for eating and increased confidence and capacity for self-feeding.
- ② Caregivers must always consider a child's individual needs in order to choose the best position for mealtimes even as a child grows bigger, stronger and more independent.
- ③ By 24-36 months old, when provided appropriate positioning and practice, children will become skilled self-feeders.



SECTION 4.4: BEYOND THE MEAL: TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE CHILD 24-36 MONTHS OLD

Children are continuing to learn so much about themselves and the world around them through their everyday experiences and relationships with their caregivers. They are wiser and stronger, more curious and determined to do so much all by themselves. In this section, we will share simple ideas to encourage healthy development across all areas of a child's third year of life — beyond the feedings.

By incorporating these ideas for a child during everyday activities and routines, caregivers can support a child's development in an efficient way that requires very little extra time. Try adding these ideas into mealtimes, dressing/undressing routines, during diaper changes, bath time, when offering comfort and when providing care for multiple children at a time.



For example, when feeding one child, another child can be enjoying playtime on the floor near her caregiver and peer.



MOTOR MOVEMENTS

Supporting a child's motor development is something that can easily be done each and every day. When a child is able to move her body and explore the world, she is helping both her body and brain to grow. Additionally, supporting a child's movement directly supports feedings. Strong children with good motor skills typically have fewer issues with feedings and any issues are resolved sooner.

MOTOR (PHYSICAL) ACTIVITIES

DESCRIPTION (WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE)

Big Movement Play

- ⇒ **Play house:** Make play houses out of large boxes for children to explore and maneuver around. Cut holes in the sides for windows and doors. Have fun crawling in and out of the "house."
- ⇒ **Play ball:** Take turns throwing, rolling, kicking and catching a ball back and forth. Have several children play together.
- ⇒ **Soccer play:** Turn a box on its side and pretend it's a soccer goal. Have fun kicking a ball into the goal.
- ⇒ **Balloon play:** Kick, toss and punch a balloon in the air around a room among several children.
- ⇒ **Kangaroo hop:** Place an object on the floor as the "starting line." Encourage children to hop as far as they can from the starting line.
- ⇒ **Outside play:** Encourage children to play with balls, practice going up and down stairs and ramps, climb playground equipment (if you have it) and have fun running, jumping and exploring.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Wagon ride: Encourage a child to fill a wagon with friends or other objects and then give rides by pulling or pushing. Laundry baskets or a box with a string/rope attached works, too. ⇒ Stair climbing: Hold a child's hand while practicing walking up and down stairs. ⇒ Freedom to explore: Offer lots of opportunities for children to freely explore their environments using big movements such as crawling, standing, walking, running, jumping, etc.
Movement and Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Dance party: Play music you enjoy and dance together. ⇒ Sing-along: Sing songs, perform finger rhymes and move your bodies. ⇒ Make music: Have fun making your own music (shaking and banging) using toy instruments or everyday items such as pots and pans.
Finger and Hand Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Pouring play: Practice pouring different items from cup to cup or pitcher to cup. Items to pour: rice, dried beans, sand, water, popcorn seeds, rocks, etc. ⇒ Table time: Use a small table, box, or upside-down laundry basket with chairs for playing (blocks, puzzles, etc.), eating and artwork (scribbling, painting, drawing, cutting, folding). ⇒ Block time: Have fun stacking blocks and then knocking them down. Larger blocks are easier to stack. ⇒ Basketball: Toss items into a laundry basket or trashcan as a game. Objects: soft balls, small pillows, bean bags, stuffed animals, etc. ⇒ Dump and fill: Collect containers and have fun dumping and filling them with objects. Shoes boxes, cardboard boxes, Tupperware and buckets all work well. ⇒ Art time: Have fun making designs and pictures using crayons, markers, chalk, pencils, paint or even water and dirt. Use fingers or brushes. ⇒ Big helpers: Ask children to be helpers for daily activities such as dressing/undressing, washing hands and other cleanup activities.

Children gather to play ball outside. Time for movement such as running, jumping and climbing is very important for every child.





PLAY AND LEARNING

Supporting a child's early play and learning is something that can easily be done each and every day. In fact, the main way children learn is through play. When a child is able to play, explore objects, interact with others and discover his environment, it is helping him grow a strong brain that will serve him well as he becomes an adult.

PLAY AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION (WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE)
Talking, Singing, Reading and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Story time: Have fun reading books together or telling your favorite stories. Share nursery rhymes or traditional tales. Ask for help turning pages, pointing out pictures, answering questions ("What happens next?") and telling the story. ⇒ Music time: Listen to music and sing songs with a child. Have fun singing along to the songs that you know. ⇒ Talking time: Talk about what a child is doing, what you are doing and what you are doing together. Use words and phrases to describe shapes, colors, numbers, letters, body parts, animals, foods, action words, feelings and other common everyday items and familiar people. ⇒ Playtime: Have fun with pretend play. Play with dolls, have a tea party, pretend to cook dinner, play "house" or imagine that you are all fun animals. ⇒ Dress-up time: Have a dress-up box with different types of clothing and accessories for children to explore such as dresses, shirts, pants, shoes, hats, scarves, gloves, belts, etc. ⇒ Number time: Use numbers throughout the day with a child. Count everything — the number of chairs in a room, children, shoes, balls, dolls, blocks, etc. ⇒ Sorting time: Sort everyday objects by color, shape, size, type, etc. Have fun sorting in piles or containers for dumping and filling.
Playtime on Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Play where the child is at – on his level– and follow his lead. Let a child guide their play with you. Children this age enjoy playing with containers, blocks, balls, pots and pans, play food and dishes, dolls, cars/trucks, big outdoor toys, books, puzzles, homemade play-doh or clay, art activities, musical instruments, plastic animals and dinosaurs, hula hoops, trampoline with handles, ball pits, flashlights, forts, tents, etc.



A young girl enjoys singing and dancing outside. She is learning through play.



COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Supporting a child's early communication and relationships is something that can easily be done each and every day. Positive relationships are the primary way to build strong children, despite hardships they may encounter. Further, supporting a child's communication is a wonderful way to nurture relationships between caregivers and children. When caregivers are deeply connected to children and showing how they understand what a child is expressing, children feel safe, secure and ready to learn and grow.

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION (WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE)
Play and Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Relate often: When together, talk, tell stories, read and sing or hum to a child. Make silly faces and sounds together. Share special rhymes or poems, look at pictures and play simple games such as "chase," "hide-and-seek," or "Simon Says." Repeat a child's words and encourage back and forth conversations with one another.
Calming and Soothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Teach regulation: During moments when a child becomes upset, use the same movements or sounds repeatedly to soothe him such as rocking, swaying, bouncing, patting, massaging, singing, shushing, jumping or music. ⇒ Heads-up: Talk to a child ahead of time about new routines, events, new foods and people. Use picture schedules to alert children to what is happening next. ⇒ Choice making: Offer a child two choices to help cope with feelings and options ("Do you want a book or blocks?").

	⇒ Share feelings: Help a child identify emotions by talking about them. Give names for feelings to help a child understand.
Positive Interactions	⇒ Connect often: Repeat the words and phrases that a child says or faces a child makes, such as smiling. Take time to gaze at a child during activities such as diaper changes, feedings, playtime and bathing. Use touch to connect, such as snuggles, hugs, massage, wrestling/rough play, wearing, holding, carrying, etc. ⇒ Sharing is caring: Teach children how to share and take turns by doing these with them during play and when interacting with others. Use simple phrases repeatedly to help teach these concepts (“My turn,” “Your turn,” “Can I have a turn?” “In 1 minute.”).
Consistently Care	⇒ Respond well: When a child expresses they’re upset, respond consistently and in a timely manner with soothing words and/or touch and physical comfort.

A group of toddlers sit together in a classroom for an activity. They are learning from their caregivers and also from each other.





KEY POINTS FOR THIS AGE

Being a supportive caregiver means supporting children during all moments throughout the day, including those activities that extend beyond mealtimes. Every activity and routine throughout a child's day is an opportunity to enhance development and quality of life. These activities don't need to be complicated or done for hours at a time. Use convenient objects from your environment, and offer short, frequent moments throughout the day for activities. Since development is interconnected, often times multiple areas can be supported simultaneously through the incorporation of one simple activity.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- ① Children learn best through meaningful experiences and interactions that occur every day. Caregivers must offer a wide variety of activities for each child so that they do not just survive, but they thrive.
- ② When caregivers support a child's entire development by encouraging play, movement and positive interactions with others, they will also be supporting a child's feeding development.
- ③ Children will reap the benefits when caregivers find small moments throughout the day to incorporate activities that support total development.