

9F: DIET ADVANCEMENT GUIDE

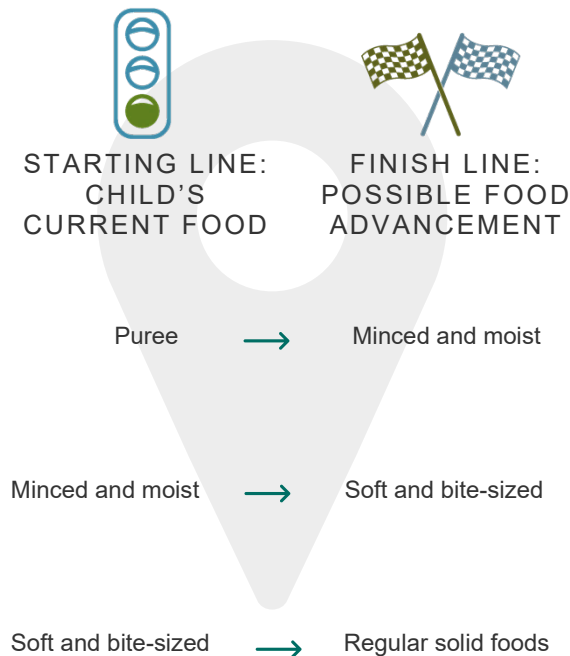


Every child deserves the opportunity to try different food textures and liquid consistencies in a safe and thoughtful manner. If a child never has the chance to try a food or liquid, we will never know what their true skill level is.

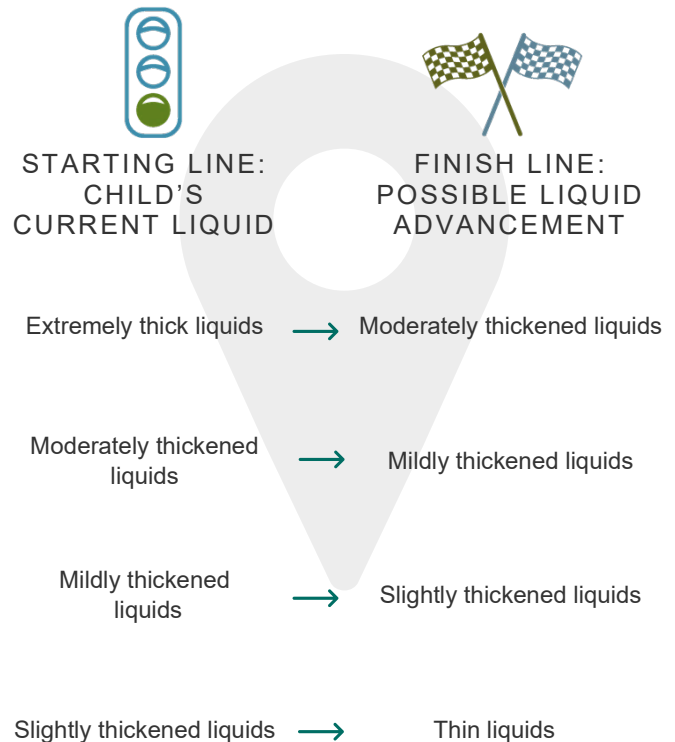
DIET ADVANCEMENT is when caregivers support a child's movement (or advancement) to eating a new food texture or drinking a new liquid consistency. Children with disabilities often need special textures and consistencies. Choosing the right food texture and liquid consistency for any child helps make mealtimes safe and comfortable. Some children are able to eventually eat (or advance) to more complex textures and consistencies. However, some children are safest and most successful with diets consisting of less challenging textures and consistencies.

Offering a different food texture or liquid consistency to a child every so often under careful supervision is the best way to determine when a child may be ready to advance their diet. Below are simple suggestions for advancing a child's food and/or liquid diet.

FOOD TEXTURE ADVANCEMENT ROAD MAP



LIQUID CONSISTENCY ADVANCEMENT ROAD MAP



DIET ADVANCEMENT GUIDELINES

- ① Start with the child’s “starting line” of current food(s) and liquids.
- ② Try a small amount of a “finish line food or liquid” (new food or liquid). *Go slowly.*
- ③ Observe how a child manages the “finish line food or liquid.”
- ④ **Problems?** → Return to serving “starting line food or liquid.” They may not be ready for it yet.
- ⑤ **No problems?** → Continue to try small amounts of “finish line food or liquid” with strict supervision over the course of several meals and advance diet when child shows appropriate skills and safety.



Advancing a child’s diet can sometimes take lots of time. Some children will advance to eating or drinking a new food or liquid over just a few meals. Others may take several months of longer. Be patient and never rush a child to advance their diet when they are not ready.



When trying new foods and liquids with a child, always provide 100 percent supervision from a knowledgeable caregiver. Children may cough or even choke when trying new foods and liquids, and it is critical that caregivers are nearby for extra support and safety.

PROBLEMS MAY LOOK LIKE:

- ∅ Coughing
- ∅ Choking
- ∅ Sputtering
- ∅ Turning a different color
- ∅ Not breathing or stopping breathing
- ∅ Wet voice quality
- ∅ Watery eyes
- ∅ Facial grimace
- ∅ Illness following introduction of new “finish line food or liquid”

HELPFUL TIPS

- ✓ Let a child touch, see, and smell “finish line food or liquid” first before offering a bite or sip.
- ✓ Offer “finish line food or liquid” alongside familiar “starting line food or liquid.”
- ✓ Offer small amounts of “finish line food or liquid” when first starting out with a child.
- ✓ If feeding a child, slowly offer the “finish line food or liquid” and provide small bites or sips.
- ✓ Only offer a “finish line food or liquid” when a child is alert and feeling well.
- ✓ Never give up. Just because a child isn’t ready for a food or liquid now doesn’t mean they won’t be ready for it later. Keep trying.