

the early years toolkit

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Why do some children find coping with lumps difficult?

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You have been directed to this Advice Sheet to help you encourage the baby or child you are caring for learn to move from strained or pureed food to food with a more lumpy texture.

Your child may be finding it hard to move on to more lumpy foods because they have some movement or sensory difficulties. They may alternatively have some oral difficulties which make it hard for them to manage different textures.

If you suspect your child has feeding or drinking difficulties, you must make sure the child is not offered food that is unsafe for them to swallow. If you have observed choking episodes, or are already receiving the advice of one of the Feeding Team, then please contact CYPIT for further advice before trying this Advice Sheet.

What you may see

- The baby or child dislikes the lumpy food and spits it out or becomes upset when offered lumpy food.
- The baby or child has difficulty swallowing the food without gagging or coughing
- The baby or child may become increasingly fussy and only willing to eat preferred smooth foods

Strategies and Advice

- Ensure the baby has head control and is preferably able to sit unsupported.
- If they are unable to sit without support due to having special needs then
 - ensure you have the right seating equipment.
 - Make sure the baby is seated in a suitable chair or on your lap which is giving them support to keep their body or trunk still.
 - Make sure you are not trying new foods when your child is tired or you

are rushed. Be patient as it takes time for your baby to get used to these new experiences.

- Make sure you are having fun together. Try not to become stressed if your baby gags as it is normal while they get used to the sensation of a lump in their mouth as they swallow. It might sound unpleasant but they will normally recover very quickly. Let them know it is okay and to try again.
- Try a very small serving of the new or lumpy food at the start of the meal so if they are sick only a mouthful comes up. Start with a mouthful or two at each meal, slowly introducing the new texture when they are hungry and more willing to try.
- Try serving the new food alongside a preferred food, offering alternate mouthfuls. This can be really helpful for babies who spit as they won't spit out their favourite food.
- Sweet lumpy foods can often be more motivating to get started and the fruit lumps can often be softer. Try lumpy puddings first if savoury foods are not being accepted as readily.
- If your child prefers lumpy jar food but rejects your cooking, don't lose heart. Often the lumps in jar foods are softer so try cooking pasta or vegetables for longer to help your baby get used to the texture and taste.
- If your child can eat home cooked puree but is struggling with lumps, gradually reduce the amount of time you blend the food to get to the lumpier texture.
- Try adding very small lumps into puree or smooth foods, such as crunched up Rice Krispies or couscous. Slowly add very small amounts to gradually build up the baby's acceptance of texture
- Have a drink to hand if they need to clear their mouth between mouthfuls.
- Recognise and respect your child's signals. If their mouth is open for another mouthful, they are telling you to try again.
- Don't lose heart if it takes time, all babies are different and learn at different rates.
- Some babies progress onto finger food before coping with lumpy or stage 2 foods. This doesn't normally mean that they won't eat lumpy food. When your baby is reaching out for finger food, try offering bite and dissolve foods first. This will mean that they are less likely to choke on this texture if a small bit breaks off in their mouth. (See the Finger Feeding Advice Sheet for more details)

If you see no improvement after three months with development of skills using this Advice Sheet, please contact CYPIT for further advice.

Examples of Bite and Dissolve Foods

Savoury

Prawn Crackers
Quavers
Skips
Wotsits
Sponge finger biscuit
Wafer biscuit

Sweet

Ice Cream Wafers
Meringues
Rice paper
Sponge cakes

The bite and dissolve foods listed above are foods not normally encouraged in a baby's diet. However, in babies with feeding difficulties they are recommended in small quantities to help develop chewing skills and tolerance of texture.

Examples of Bite and Chew Easily Foods

Savoury

Ripe peeled avocado
(canned or fresh)
Soft cooked potato
Soft cooked carrot
Soft cooked parsnips
Soft cooked swede (chunks)
Soft cooked swede (chunks)
Crumbly cheeses
Filleted cooked fish
Cooked pasta

Sweet

Ripe peeled pear

Ripe peeled nectarines
Cooked peeled apple

Examples of Bite and Stay Firm Foods

Savoury

Dried meat
Dried fish (oriental stores)
Dried pears
Dried apricots
Dehydrated fruit strips
Bikkiepegs
Liquorice sticks

Sweet

Dried banana
Dried peaches

Examples of Soft Lumpy Texture Foods

Savoury

Baked beans
Scrambled egg

Sweet

Fork mashed vegetables with baby gravy

Stewed fruit

Porridge

Cereal with milk

Rice puddings