



# Developmental Principles Guiding Feeding Practices

**Appropriate feeding depends on following the Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding. The child must be allowed and encouraged to determine what and how much to eat from what the parent provides.**

Child's Age, Developmental Tasks	Parents' Jobs In Optimum Feeding
<p><b>Newborn 1-3 months</b> Homeostasis Remain calm and alert Begin to be interested Filter stimuli Regulate sleep states</p>	<p><b>Core tasks:</b> Observe and understand the infant Respond to infant cues Understand and respect sleep rhythms Learn to read and respond to baby's cues Time care and feeding for quiet alert state Understand baby's own temperament Be willing and able to feed on demand</p>
<p><b>Infant 2-6 months</b> Attachment Learn to love Coordinate reflexes Move and communicate deliberately</p>	<p><b>Core task:</b> Develop and maintain emotional give and take Help baby be calm and alert during feeding Feed baby when she wants to eat Talk and smile; talk and smile back Understand baby's signs and do what baby wants</p>
<p><b>Older baby 5-9 months</b> Attachment/separation individuation Consolidating attachment Beginning to experience self as separate</p>	<p><b>Core task:</b> Understand and support the child's interest what lies beyond the parent. Understand baby's development: eating skills and body control Start solids based on what baby can <i>do</i>, not how old she is Feed at baby's pace: fast or slow, little or much, brave or cautious Give baby many chances to like new food Have family meals the child is working toward joining</p>
<p><b>Almost-toddler 7-15 months</b> Separation individuation Begins to experience self as separate Cares deeply about doing it him- or herself</p>	<p><b>Core task:</b> Recognize and support the child's need to do it herself Include the child at family meals Choose "safe" food to pick up, chew and swallow Give many chances to experiment with new food and learn to like it Time snacks so child can be hungry but not too hungry at mealtime Give attention but not <i>all</i> the attention</p>
<p><b>Older toddler 11-36 months</b> Separation individuation Somatopsychological differentiation (distinguishing feelings from sensations) Organizes behavior into sequences Develops concept of control Develops perception of self as "separate" Grapples with balancing connection and autonomy</p>	<p><b>Core task:</b> Teach child he or she is part of the family Have family meals; scheduled snacks Don't let the child graze Eat with the child Teach the child to behave at mealtimes Don't short order cook Let the child experiment, eat much or little</p>
<p><b>Preschooler 3-5 years</b> Initiative Learning and doing Working toward mastery Symbolic thought: "figures out" Imitates and tries to please</p>	<p><b>Core task:</b> Clarify choices about parenting: authoritarian, permissive, authoritative Provide mastery opportunities Maintain structure of meals and snacks Don't force, reward or shame Parents eat with child; don't just feed Make mealtimes pleasant</p>