



families

fit

baby talk
about food

signs & signals



Your child cannot always tell you in words when she is hungry or when she is full. When it comes to feeding, you will need to look for signs and signals. These signs tell you when she is hungry and when she is full and it is time to stop feeding. As the parent, you must respond to your child's signals. If you make her eat more when she is full, she may become overweight. But when you respond to your child's signals, you help her learn healthy eating habits. What is your child telling you?



months

4-6

Your baby is beginning to sit with help and is now ready to try infant cereal from a spoon. Start gradually. She may eat only a few small spoonfuls at first. Remember to stop feeding when she shows you she is full.

When I'm hungry, I may:

- Lean forward for food.
- Recognize and reach for my spoon.
- Move my mouth or suck on my hand.

Stop feeding me when I:

- Push the spoon or bottle away.
- Hold my mouth shut.
- Lose interest in eating.
- Turn my upper body away.

Things you can help me learn:

- Eat infant cereal from a spoon.



months

6-9

Your baby is changing and growing. Watch for and respond to her signals that show you when she is hungry or full. She may want to try to feed herself. You can begin to offer plain, cooked fork-mashed or strained vegetables, fruits, and meats.

When I'm hungry, I may:

- Pound my tray.
- Grab food and try to feed myself.
- Cry if you stop feeding me when I'm still hungry.

Stop feeding me when I:

- Refuse to eat.
- Cry if you force me to eat.
- Lose interest and be easily distracted.
- Turn my head away or shake my head "no."

Things you can help me learn:

- Pick up small pieces of soft food and feed myself.
- Drink from a cup with your help. I will probably spill some. I'm learning.



months

9-12

Your baby is learning many new things. She will be messy when she eats. Be patient. This is normal. She can drink more from a cup and less from a bottle. Remember: When she shows you she is full, it is time to stop feeding her.

When I'm hungry, I may:

- Get excited when I see food.
- Grab food to feed myself.
- Reach for foods you are eating.

Stop feeding me when I:

- Throw my food or utensils.
- Play with my food.
- Lose interest in my food and pay attention to other things.

Things you can help me learn:

- Drink from a cup.
- Hold a spoon. It will take me a long time to learn to eat from a spoon.
- Feed myself — I will be messy.
- Sit without help.
- Pick up food with my whole hand and palm.



months

12-24

At this age, your child's growth slows down and so does his appetite. Trust your child to know when he is full and do not force him to eat more than he wants. It is normal for your child to be picky about food and easily distracted at mealtimes.

When I am hungry, I may:

- Tell you with words when and what I want to eat.
- Want to eat the same foods all the time.
- Want to see, lick, taste, and touch a new food many times before I eat it.
- Eat small amounts. My normal serving sizes are much smaller than yours.

Stop feeding me when I:

- Say “no” often.
- Cry, whine, or fight with you if you “force” me to eat, or I may give up and eat more than I need.
- Start to play with my food.

Things you can help me learn:

- Gradually give up the bottle by 12–14 months of age.
- Drink from a cup by myself. I’m learning, but I’m still messy.
- Use a child-sized spoon and fork. I’ll get better with your help.

Help Me Learn and Grow

- Encourage me to feed myself even though I'm messy.
- Listen and watch me. I can tell you when I'm full.
- When I tell or show you I'm full, let me stop eating.
- Set a good example. I'm watching what you eat.
- Have meals and snacks at regular times.
- Don't use food to reward or punish me.
- Keep me safe. Don't let me have foods that can cause me to choke.
- Let me use a child's cup. I can give up the bottle by 12-14 months of age.
- Give me small servings. I can't eat as much as you.



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