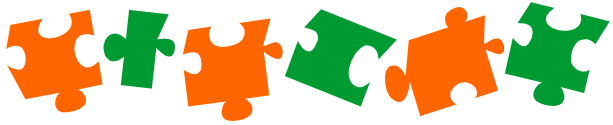


HOW IS MY BABY/TODDLER LEARNING AT MEAL TIMES?



Meal times are important learning times for babies. When we bottle-feed young infants, we use this time to build relationships with them. Cradling a baby while feeding creates the perfect angle to make eye contact, smile and let baby enjoy looking at our face.



These interactions are so valuable to the lessons that a baby is learning about the world. The baby sees a trusting, smiling face providing a warm meal, a comfortable lap and soft, kind words.

This helps the baby feel loved. Scientists have shown how these loving interactions play a part in helping a baby's brain develop.



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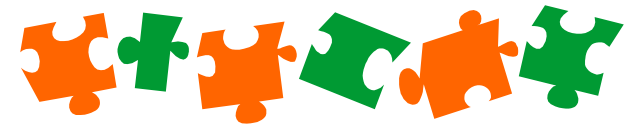


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As a baby grows, we provide finger food and small spoons, so that the baby can feed himself. This allows him to feel independent and to practice using his fingers. This is important for writing and other tasks.

As babies grow to be toddlers, we try to make meal times “family times,” where food is served “family style.” Teachers eat with the children, conversations are frequent, and there is discussion about good nutrition. It is easier for toddlers to understand about carrots or bread while they can see, feel and taste them.



It is easier for toddlers to understand about carrots or bread while they can see, feel and taste them.

We might also have toddlers help prepare some meals, which is a great science and math experience. Measuring one cup of flour or a teaspoon of cinnamon helps the child to become familiar with math concepts. Seeing the batter become cake is a science lesson for a toddler.

We expect toddlers to be messy, so we use smocks or aprons and protect the floor with plastic or newspaper. The children help clean up. Cooking experiences help toddlers to feel more independent and self-confident because they are helping adults do their work.

Released by Don Bower,
Extension Human Development Specialist
Developed under contract by Linda J. Grant

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the counties of the state cooperating. The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Leaflet CHFDE-24-07

May, 1998

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, The University of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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