



Feeding for Function

PARENT STARTER GUIDE

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WELCOME

Starting solids can feel exciting... and overwhelming. There's so much information about what to feed your baby. But very little about how feeding skills actually develop. As a speech-language pathologist, pediatric feeding specialist and certified myofunctional therapist, I've worked with countless families who wish they had known what to look for from the very beginning. Because early feeding isn't just about nutrition.

It's about building:

- Oral motor strength
- Jaw development
- Tongue movement
- Lip closure
- Healthy chewing patterns

This blueprint will walk you through the first two weeks of solids in a way that supports functional feeding skills from the start.

Kelly





Is Your Baby Ready?

Before introducing solids, look for these signs.

Postural & Motor Readiness

- Sits with minimal support
- Good head and neck control
- Can maintain upright posture in a highchair

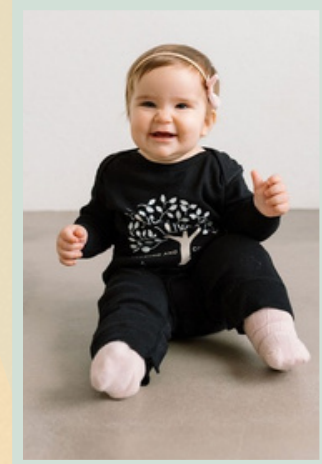
Oral Motor Readiness

- Loss of tongue thrust reflex
- Brings hands and toys to mouth
- Shows improved lip control

Interest & Engagement

- Watches you eat
- Reaches for food
- Opens mouth when food approaches

If your baby is not showing these signs yet, it's okay to wait. Readiness matters more than age alone.



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Positioning: The Foundation

Stability at the hips creates ability at the lips.

Proper positioning allows your baby's mouth to work efficiently and safely.

Aim for:

- 90-degree bend at hips
- 90-degree bend at knees
- Feet fully supported
- Upright trunk
- Neutral head position

When the body is stable, the jaw, lips, and tongue can move with better control.

This is one of the most overlooked — and most important — parts of starting solids.





Week 1: Plan the First Taste

Focus: Exposure and Skill Building

- Offer one meal per day
- Start with smooth puree
- Gradually thicken slightly over several days
- Allow baby to explore and get messy
- Encourage lip closure around the spoon
- Don't rush volume.



We are building skills, not just filling bellies. Messy is learning.

Week 2: Plan Progress with Intention

Focus: Early Texture Advancement

- Move from smooth puree to fork-mashed textures
- Introduce slight texture variation
- Allow baby to begin self-feeding practice
- Place food slightly off-center on the tongue
- Encourage active mouth movements

Avoid staying on thin purees for too long. Avoid over-chopping foods. Babies learn to chew by practicing progressive textures.



Supporting Oral Motor Skills Early

Early feeding builds more than eating skills.



It supports:

- Lip closure
- Tongue elevation
- Tongue lateralization
- Jaw strength
- Airway development

You can support these skills by:

- Spoon feeding with intention
- Encouraging self-feeding
- Introducing open cup practice
- Exploring straw drinking



These early movements lay the foundation for mature chewing patterns later.

Red Flags to Watch For

While some gagging is normal during early learning, consult a specialist if you notice:

- Persistent gagging beyond early exposure
- Reliance on purees past expected progression
- Limited tongue movement
- Food pocketing
- Wet or gurgly voice
- Frequent coughing or choking
- Feeding fatigue

If something feels off, trust your instincts.

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What Happens Next...

The first two weeks are just the beginning. Inside Feeding for Function, you'll learn:

- Full texture progression from puree to table foods
- Tongue elevation and lateralization strategies
- Jaw development and chewing mechanics
- Airway and lip closure support
- How to prevent picky eating
- Step-by-step roadmap through the first year

If you want confidence beyond the first bites, join the waitlist for Feeding for Function.

