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Refining the art of eating

Vroom, vroom—motor skills!

Your Crawler isn't just using their motor skills to move around—they're also learning how to use their tiny fingers and mouths to eat. They're figuring out:

- Finger control to pick up food.
- Hand-eye coordination to bring their hand to their mouth.
- How to release food from their hands into their mouth.
- Taking small bites to fit in their mouth
- Beginning to chew in a circle while their tongue moves side-to-side.

Gearing up to chew and swallow

Here's what's happening so your baby can eat the good stuff you're feeding them:

- Their gag reflex moves further back so they can try more types of foods.
- They can move their tongue side-to-side now, rather than just forward and back.
- Their jaw moves more easily when they're eating.
- Baby teeth may start growing in the front of their mouth.

These changes all mean your baby is able to mash and chew lots of different new foods

Understanding your little one's cues

While you're the one feeding your baby, it's their choice whether, and how much, they want to eat. Remember to pay attention to their hunger and fullness cues.

Hold on, baby—using their hands

Your baby uses their hands to explore just as much as their mouths. Around 8 months, your Crawler may have started self-feeding with their hands and fingers. It might get messy, but that's okay. Your Crawler is learning-by-doing, which makes them feel more independent. While they'll be far from a master, let them experiment. Soon enough, they'll be grabbing toys.

What they're Eating Now

While you may love a crunchy chip, your Crawler's food should have a soft texture so they can work on mashing and chewing. It actually helps them develop the muscles to speak. Introducing new textures earlier may help them develop tastes for these foods later, so try thick baby foods with little pieces of soft-cooked vegetables now to start getting them ready for more exciting foods. It also helps your little one learn how to put food in their mouth and swallow, as well as teaching them how to use their lips on the spoon.

Choosing foods for self-feeding practice

Who doesn't love snacktime? Finger foods are also a great way to help your tot learn how to self-feed, and once they get the hang of it, you can even try adding more textures.

Other baby foods that you may want to introduce to your Crawler are:

- Soft, bite-sized pieces of chopped, cooked fruits and vegetables (canned fruit in water works too).
- Mashed cooked beans and tofu.
- Bite sized pieces of bread, toast, soft tortilla strips, crackers.
- Gerber® Puffs.
- Well-cooked bite size pieces of pasta.
- Smooth fruited yogurt.
- Avocado, peeled and cut into bite size pieces.

Try also gradually adding bite sized pieces of:

- Fresh, soft fruit, like bananas
- Cooked vegetables
- Soft, chopped, cooked meats and fish
- Cooked eggs
- Mixed dishes like casseroles

Trying new foods is an exciting time for your baby. Just give them what's best for where they're at, and let them have fun with it. If you have any more questions, your personal baby expert, Dotti, is available 24/7.