



Speech By The Bay
SPEECH, LANGUAGE & FEEDING THERAPY

Feeding & Oral Motor Milestones Checklist

Track your child's feeding skills and oral motor development from birth through age 3.

Child's Name: _____ **Date Started:** _____ **Age:** _____

Feeding milestones reflect typical skill ranges gathered from ASHA and pediatric feeding research — each child develops at their own pace, and skills build on one another over time. This checklist is an observational tracking tool, not a diagnostic instrument. If you have concerns about your child's feeding or swallowing, talk with your pediatrician or a certified speech-language pathologist (SLP).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive checklist and does not cover every feeding or oral motor skill. Always consult your pediatrician or a feeding specialist with any concerns related to feeding or swallowing.

Age	Feeding & Oral Motor Milestones (Typical Range)
Birth–3 Months	Latches to nipple; coordinates suck and swallow. Holds head up when supported and turns head toward nipple, opening mouth. Feeds on breast milk and/or formula only.
4–6 Months	Opens mouth for the spoon and uses the tongue to move food to the back of the mouth for swallowing. Brings hands to the breast/bottle and to the mouth. Ready for infant cereal and smooth, no-lump purees.
6–9 Months	Leans forward to receive food, picks up food with fingers, and starts to feed self. Tries to hold a spoon. Starts drinking from a cup (with spilling). Moves food around the mouth and begins munching. Ready for lumpy purees and soft, chewable solids cut into strips.
9–12 Months	Holds the bottle/sippy cup with both hands and the spoon during meals. Feeds self with fingers. Takes small bites from larger pieces and begins chewing on both sides of the mouth (“rotary chewing”). Closes lips during the swallow. Ready for soft, bite-sized table foods.
12–18 Months	Sits upright independently for meals. Feeds self with utensils or fingers. Drinks from a sippy cup without help and an open cup with some spilling. Drinks from a straw without help. Moves food side to side in the mouth with the tongue. Ready for mixed-texture foods.
18–24 Months	Feeds self with fingers or utensils; drinks from a small cup with minimal spilling. Chews consistently on both sides of the mouth and swallows without spilling. Managing foods that require more chewing, cut into safe pieces.
2–3 Years	Feeds self with a fork and spoon (still uses fingers at times). Drinks from an open cup without spilling. Chews all textures, including tougher ones, without gagging or choking. Eats most crunchy, hard, or mixed textures (avoiding choking-risk foods like popcorn, hot dogs, or whole grapes).

Age	When to Seek an Evaluation — Feeding Red Flags
Any Age	Frequent coughing, choking, or gagging during meals; consistent difficulty breathing while eating; arching or stiffening during feeding.
Any Age	Refusal of entire food textures or food groups; feeding takes longer than 30 minutes routinely; poor weight gain.
Any Age	Loss of a feeding skill the child previously had, or ongoing distress/crying at mealtimes.

Sources: ASHA Feeding & Swallowing Milestones (Birth–3 Years) · ASHA Pediatric Feeding Disorder resources

SUCKING & EARLY FEEDING SKILLS (Birth–6 Months)

Early Feeding Skills

- ☐ Latches to breast/bottle
- ☐ Coordinated suck-swallow-breathe
- ☐ Holds head steady when supported
- ☐ Turns head toward nipple (rooting)
- ☐ Bottle/breastfed without difficulty
- ☐ Calm and alert during feeds

SPOON FEEDING & PUREES (4–9 Months)

Purees & Spoon Feeding

- ☐ Opens mouth for spoon
- ☐ Accepts thin purees
- ☐ Moves tongue to swallow puree
- ☐ Brings hands/toys to mouth
- ☐ Sits supported in highchair
- ☐ Tolerates infant cereal
- ☐ Accepts lumpy / mashed purees
- ☐ Begins munching pattern

TEXTURES & CHEWING (6–36 Months)

Textures & Chewing Skills

- ☐ Accepts soft, chewable solids
- ☐ Munches soft table food
- ☐ Takes small bites independently
- ☐ Chews on both sides (rotary chewing)
- ☐ Manages mixed-texture foods
- ☐ Manages soft bite-sized table food
- ☐ Chews tougher textures (meat)
- ☐ Chews without gagging/choking
- ☐ Manages crunchy/hard textures safely

CUP & STRAW DRINKING (6–36 Months)

Cup & Straw Drinking

- ☐ Bites/mouths cup edge
- ☐ Drinks from cup with spilling
- ☐ Holds bottle/sippy independently
- ☐ Drinks from straw with help
- ☐ Drinks from straw without help
- ☐ Drinks from open cup with spilling
- ☐ Drinks from open cup, minimal spill
- ☐ Drinks from open cup, no spilling

SELF-FEEDING SKILLS (6–36 Months)

Self-Feeding Skills

- ☐ Brings food to mouth with hands
- ☐ Picks up food with fingers (raking)
- ☐ Uses pincer grasp for small food
- ☐ Tries to hold spoon
- ☐ Holds spoon during meal
- ☐ Self-feeds with fingers
- ☐ Self-feeds with spoon (spills some)
- ☐ Self-feeds with spoon/fork (minimal spill)
- ☐ Uses fork to spear food