

Speech Tips at Mealtime For Toddlers



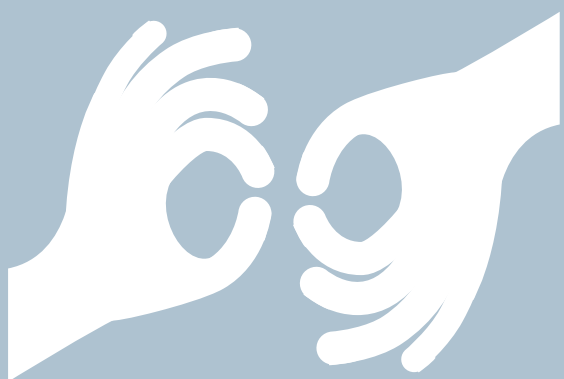
Why Mealtime?

- Meal and snack times are important and consistent parts of your child's daily routine.
- These natural opportunities are perfect to provide simulating activities for your child's language development throughout their day.



Give Smaller Portions

- Giving smaller portions provides the opportunity for your child to verbally request "more" of their snack or drink.
 - You can teach your child the simple sign for "more" and consider this an acceptable way to request more yummy snacks.
- Rather than piling your child's plate or bowl with an entire serving, give only a few bites at a time so that they have the opportunity to request more of the food.
- Move other portions and drinks out of their reach so that your child has to engage (communicate) to obtain the snack or drink.
- Don't forget to praise your child for making a request - this is how they know we want them to communicate and participate.
- Present the additional food item as soon as it is requested as a reward for good talking.



Making Choices

- Give your child as many opportunities as possible to indicate their own choice about what to eat for breakfast or a snack. For example, offer two (perfectly acceptable) options and let them indicate their choice.
 - Hold two choices within your child's view, and ask them which they want.
 - Encourage verbal answers, and then expand on what your child says. For example, if the child says banana (or points to the banana), you can expand by saying: "I want a banana. It's a yellow banana."
- As your child becomes more consistent at expressing their choices, you can take away the visual information so that your child only has to listen to hear the options.



Additional Tips

- The ability to make choices and express wants and needs develops early in life through reaching, pointing, and making eye contact.
 - Verbalizing desires should begin between 12-18 months of age.
- Research has shown that including sign language when teaching your child to communicate can help a child learn to talk sooner, understand and use more words, and feel more confident in expressing themselves.



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