



Sensory Aspects to Mealtimes

Alerting Activities:

The following strategies will help “wake up” your child’s face and mouth before a meal to help him use his mouth more efficiently for eating. Use these activities just before meals and during meals and to help keep the mouth active.

Be sure your child is comfortable, supported position prior to the meal. Your child’s feet should be placed on the floor and their bum fully resting on a stable base. Before alerting the mouth, pay attention to the rest of your child’s body. Give a brisk body rub, a tickle, or a bounce on your lap or ball to help wake up the whole body.

Washcloth Wake-up

Wipe your child’s face briskly with a cool cold facecloth.

Wipe cheeks up, down, and diagonally.

Wipe chin up and down.

Be random and uneven in your touch until the end of the rub. The wipe cheeks and upper and lower lips toward a closed mouth position in preparation for eating.



Finger Tapping on the Face

Tap your child’s face with your fingers

Starting just above the upper lip begin at the midline and tap using one finger to the right corner of the lip.

Begin again at the midline and tap using one finger to the left corner of the lip.

Now do just under the lower lip. Begin at the midline and tap using the finger to the right corner of the lip.

Begin again at the midline and tap to the left corner of the lip.

Now tap the cheeks.

Start with the right side and tap from the jaw joint (at ear level) to the right corner of the mouth. Do the same with the left side.

Move on to using a vibrating massager (e.g. electric toothbrush) once you feel that your child is tolerating the finger tapping.



Explore different textures through food play

The aim is to encourage your child to explore different textures

Activity	Equipment	Play suggestions
Exposure to dry food	Lentils, cereals, biscuits, crackers, toy cars and trucks	Driving toy cars/trucks through various dried foods of different coarseness. Running hands through trays of dried food. Scooping beans, lentils, etc from one tray to the next.
Exposure to wet food materials	Jelly, choc spread, yoghurt, plastic animals	Cutting out jelly shapes, scooping jelly in and out of containers, finger painting with chocolate spread/yoghurt on card. Plastic animals playing in 'swamp' created from above material
Exposure to mixed wet and dry food	Choc spread, yoghurt, hundreds and thousands, pasta, paper plates, animals	Create a face on a paper plate with different materials. Develop swamp theme with plastic animals and build house with biscuits etc.

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