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**Expanding a Child’s Food Repertoire**

Trying to expand your child’s food repertoire? Let him/her help you prepare and cook some meals. This is a good way to introduce new foods in a different way. Not only does he/she get to see how foods are cooked, but he/she also gets to interact with these foods by mixing, touching, and cutting them. Encourage him/her (in a fun and non-stressful way) to touch the food with his fingers, smell it, or lick it off his/her fingers. Some fun and kid-friendly snack ideas are Dirt Cups (chocolate pudding, crushed Oreo cookies, and gummy worms/frogs), English muffin pizzas (English muffins, tomato sauce, and shredded mozzarella cheese), seasonal/holiday cookies using cookie cutters, and S’mores (chocolate candy, marshmallows, and graham crackers). Have fun cooking with your child!

**The Importance of Feeding**

**Body:** Positioning is very important! Your child needs to sit at a 90 degree angle (hip and knees), with feet flat on the floor or foot rest. Your child’s trunk needs to be upright to foster coordination between eating, respiration and digestion. The position of the head should be in midline or slightly tucked forward.

**Eyes:** When feeding your child, the spoon should be positioned at or slightly below eye level. This prevents your child from looking up, which causes the mouth to open, and lip closure will not occur.

**Lips:** During feeding, it is very important for the lips to be closed. A child’s lips need to close around the spoon before you pull out the spoon. This is how your child learns to take the food off the spoon on his/her own. Do not tip the spoon up and scrape the food off using your child’s gums or teeth.

**Language:** Meals are a wonderful time to reinforce language. When possible, sit facing your child so that he/she can watch your face. Reinforce [m] sounds: “m good,” “more” plus the names of the foods, the utensils, dishes and cup, as well as other objects you may have. You can also reinforce vowel sounds, as well: “oo”, “o”.

Speak to your child’s speech therapist for more information if your child requires feeding therapy.



**Language Development through Cooking Activities**

Cooking with your child is a great way to help increase his/her receptive and expressive vocabulary skills while having fun! Let your child help measure and pour ingredients. Talk about the color, texture, smell and look of the different ingredients. You can encourage your child to answer related questions about that food (e.g. “Hmmm, is this dry or wet? Is a banana a fruit or a vegetable? Is that warm or cold?) Your child can practice following directions, taking turns, answering questions, applying basic concepts, recalling information…and maybe even try some new foods!!! A great way to expand on a cooking activity is to read a related book. Contact your Speech Therapist for more fun ideas!



**Verbal Gems**

When a little boy was asked by his speech therapist, “What do you wear on your feet at the beach?” he responded, “Flip socks!” (Hey, that could be a new trend!)

During a therapy session, a therapist used a stuffed Barney to model walking. While doing so, she said, “Doopty, doop, doop, doop.” Then she asked him, “What is Barney doing?” The child replied, “Barney dooping!” (You can’t make this stuff up! LOL!)