

Why does my baby need lumpy, textured food ?

Adults chew and swallow all kinds of different textures of food automatically - we just do it without even thinking about it.

Chewing and swallowing lumpy or textured food is an oral-motor skill that your 6 - 12 month old baby needs to *learn* how to do. And they learn by practice!



Store-bought baby food (or table food that is pureed smooth) slides quickly and easily to the back of your baby's mouth with a simple tongue motion against the roof of the mouth.

Soft but lumpy, or textured table foods require your baby to use his tongue and jaws in a more complex way, in order to mash it to get it ready to swallow.



Babies who get table foods as soon as they begin on solids, and who get lumpier, textured foods early on tend to become better eaters! They progress faster to a wide variety of food, they are better self-feeders, and, they can have better speech development too! Don't let your baby get "stuck" on mushy food!

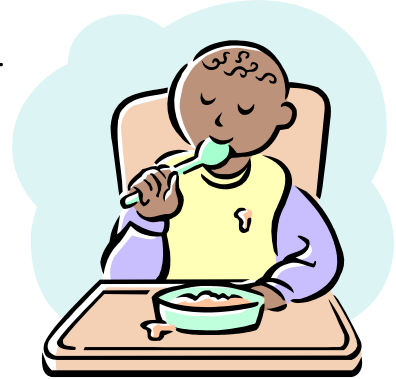


BUT my baby has no teeth yet! No worries. It's amazing what your baby can do with his or her gums. Have you ever got your finger caught between your baby's jaws? They have powerful chompers regardless of whether they have teeth or not.

Gagging is NOT Choking!

Many parents worry that their babies or young children will choke while they are learning to eat different textures. Here are some important things to keep in mind about gagging and choking:

Gagging is NORMAL. Gagging is a *GOOD* thing! Your baby can still breathe and make noises when they gag. Your baby will gag when food gets too far back before she is ready to swallow it. Gagging pushes it forward again. Infants and young children have a strong gag reflex, which protects their airways and helps prevent choking. Gagging is necessary for your baby's learning process. It helps them learn what they can and cannot handle in their mouth (how big of a bite they can take, how much food can fit in there...). Gagging usually bothers parents more than babies! Try not to react when your baby gags, so you don't alarm them. They might even get all red in the face and spit out a lot of food.



Choking is dangerous. Choking occurs when food gets lodged in a child's wind pipe, preventing them from breathing. Foods that are choking hazards are round, smooth hard or tough foods (raw vegetables, hot dogs, grapes, nuts, candy, popcorn, etc...). Soft but lumpy foods (cooked vegetables, cooked rice or pasta, bread, pieces of banana, canned fruit, stewed or ground meat etc...) are usually **not** choking hazards! An adult should always be right with a baby when they eat.

The Tongue-Test Here's a quick way to tell if a food might be a choking hazard: if you can easily squish or break apart a food between your tongue and the roof of your mouth, it's probably OK to give your older baby (7 months +).