

## Trafford Children's Therapy Service

### EARLY YEARS - LEARNING TO USE A FORK

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1. Good sitting position at the table is important. A child is more able to use their hands freely for feeding if they are sitting with their feet flat on floor, bottom back in chair, forearms comfortably resting on a table.
2. After your child has become successful with using a spoon, they will be ready to use a fork to scoop up food or to stab bite – sized pieces of food.
3. Introduce a fork into playtime activities e.g. using a plastic fork to stab small pieces of play dough and then feed a toy animal or doll.
4. Encourage your child to stab pieces of food that are easy to pierce e.g. sliced cooked carrots, soft fruits, bread, cheese cubes, sausage, and cucumber.
5. Use a plate with an edge to stop food from sliding over the plate.
5. Put a damp cloth under the bowl/plate to hold it still or use a piece of non-slip mat to stabilise the bowl/plate.
6. Provide your child with a spoon and a fork at meal times. Show your child how much more effective a fork is for some foods rather than a spoon.
7. Let your child experiment with using a fork.
8. Let your child hold their fork with either hand, unless they are demonstrating a strong hand preference, or have much better control of the fork with one hand.
9. Try helping your child by holding and guiding their hand to stab and scoop with the fork. We call this “hand over hand”.



## What type of fork should I use?

1. A commercially available child sized fork is best.
2. A fork with a short handle will be easier to manipulate.
3. If your child has difficulty with grasping the fork handle, try forks that have built-up or fatter handles, ensuring that the handle thickness allows for a comfortable grasp. Some have a curve in the handle which can make it easier to lift the food from the plate to the mouth successfully.
4. An example is Caring Cutlery which has grooves in the handles for children to place their fingers in. This can help guide them to where their fingers should be placed and can help them control the cutlery.

### Caring Cutlery:



Remember that **PRACTICE** is the only way to master this skill, and it can be fun.