

Trafford Children's Therapy Service**EARLY YEARS - LEARNING TO USE A SPOON**

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. Practice using the spoon during playtime activities e.g. using a plastic spoon to scoop small pieces of play dough/ toy food and then feed a toy animal.
3. Encourage your child to scoop food that is easiest e.g. food that sticks to the spoon such as mashed potatoes or yoghurt. Add sauce, gravy or custard to make food easy to scoop.
4. Use a plate with an edge to stop food from sliding over the plate or use a bowl.
5. Put a damp cloth under the bowl/plate to hold it still or use a piece of non-slip mat to stabilize the bowl/plate.
6. Let your child experiment with using a spoon.
7. Let your child hold the spoon with either hand, unless they are demonstrating a strong hand preference, or have much better control of the spoon with one hand.
8. Try helping your child by loading the spoon with food and leaving them to put it in their mouth. Once your child has mastered this help them to learn to load the spoon by putting your hand over theirs and guiding their hand. We call this "hand over hand".
9. If your child is finding this skill particularly difficult use "hand over hand" for the first half of the meal and feed them the rest of the meal to minimise hunger and frustration. Practice during snack times.
10. Encourage your child to practice the scooping action needed for spoon feeding in play activities, e.g. practice digging with a spade/spoon in sand. Offer different types of spoons such as big wooden ones and small plastic spoons. Feed doll and teddy with spoon. Keep this practice fun.



What type of spoon should I use?

1. A commercially available child sized spoon is best.
2. A spoon with a short handle will be easier to manipulate.
3. If your child has difficulty with grasping the spoon handle, try spoons 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.

Junior Caring Cutlery:



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