

**Be a good model:** Try and offer your child foods at the same time the rest of the family are eating. Offer small tastes of your meals (unseasoned and at the correct consistency) if your child shows interest.

**Keep persevering:** Research suggests that parents may need to offer their child the same food 12-14 times before they will accept it. However, many parents give up after 3-4 attempts. Be patient and keep trying.

**Mouthing:** Mouthing of toys can help you introduce your child to different textures and sensations in their mouths without the pressure of managing to swallow food as well. Objects such as commercially available teething toys, toothbrushes, spoons, soft toys, chewy tubes can be tried with supervision. The mouthing toy can be dipped into a tasty purée such as yoghurt, so that your child makes the connection between food and chewing. Remember, the easiest child can have a fussy day, particularly if they are unwell or teething.



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Children & Families

Speech & Language Therapy


Moving from Smooth to  
Lumpy Foods


## Why do some children have difficulties with lumps in their food?

Some children, who have been enjoying smooth foods, e.g. purées, can get stuck at the next stage when lumpier foods are introduced. They may spit out the lumps, gag on them and may even vomit. There are a number of reasons this may occur, including : prematurity, medical, physical or sensory difficulties or immature tongue movements.

Your SLT will help explain possible reasons as to why your child is having some difficulties, and will work with you to help build your child's acceptance of lumpier foods.

## General Tips to move from Puree to Lumpier Foods -

- As a first step, try adding some thickening agent, e.g. baby rice/cereal, instant potato etc. into runnier smooth purée. This will give your child opportunities to experience a different sensation and require them to use their tongues more to manipulate the food without the challenge of lumps. 
- Try offering the spoon to the side of your child's mouth. This will help them learn to move their tongue around more in their mouth to find the food and is important in developing early chewing skills.
- As your child is able to tolerate the thicker purée, try grinding some of the foods your child enjoys. Ground foods provide consistent sized, small lumps.

- Gradually introduce small soft lumps in the thick, ground food, e.g. mashed banana, avocado, fork mashed vegetables, small soft pasta lumps. Avoid vegetables that have an outer skin, e.g. peas, corn, etc until your child is able to tolerate more lumps. Begin with one lump and gradually increase the number of lumps. 
- Introduce changes slowly so that your child has time to build tolerance at each level and always move on to the next stage using foods your child enjoys. You can try offering a spoonful of a familiar consistency followed by the new texture.
- Introduce one element at any one time, i.e. introduce lumps to familiar foods before introducing new flavours.

## Other Considerations



**Seating :** Be sure your child is in a well supported sitting position – a chair or high chair will offer more support than sitting on your lap. It is important that their head is well supported and with their chin tucked in.

**Temperature :** Chilled foods generally tend to have less odour than warmed foods and may therefore be more readily accepted.

**Make it fun :** For many parents moving from smooth to lumpy solids can be an exciting but challenging time. Although mealtimes can become stressful, try and keep calm during mealtimes as your child will sense this. Concentrate on making mealtimes fun. Never bribe your child to eat.

**Exploring :** Let your child experiment and play with foods. Although this can be messy, it can give your child a greater sense of control over what they are eating.

