

PLEASE PHONE IF YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS:

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Learning to Enjoy Different Foods

Messy Play Ideas



www.hacw.nhs.uk/childrensSLT



Worcestershire Speech and Language Therapy



SLT_Worcs

HOW MESSY PLAY AND FOOD PLAY HELP?

Children learn about different food textures, tastes and smells by handling them and experiencing them regularly.

Experiencing foods in play can increase acceptance of new foods because there is no pressure for them to eat the food.

GAMES YOU COULD PLAY:

DRY FOODS:

- **STACKING/BUILDING** - Use cubes of cake, cheese or Weetabix cut up into different sizes. Try encouraging your child to break up, crumble and squash the pieces allowing them to feel the different textures.
- **FILLING AND POURING** - Put cereal into a large bowl, box or tray. Fill small pots with it, pour it out, mix it and squash it with different utensils or with hands.
- **SMALL WORLD PLAY** - Spread crisps or cereal out over the mat and create roads for toy cars to drive on. Fill large toy trucks and build big piles or hills, and make homes to hide toy animals. You could also use meringues to make a winter scene.

SOFT AND MOIST FOODS:

- **MAKE SHAPES** by putting mashed potato in jelly moulds and turning them out, or add water to Weetabix and mix to a consistency that can be moulded into shapes.
- **HIDE** motivating food, e.g. wrapped chocolate buttons in a bowl of spaghetti or pasta, for your child to find.
- Substitute **PLAY DOUGH** with ready roll icing and use your fingers, rolling pin and cutters to create a masterpiece.

WET AND RUNNY FOODS:

- **PAINTING/PRINTING** - Paint a picture on a piece of paper with tomato sauce, ice cream sauce, yoghurt or chocolate spread. Try using your fingers instead of



a paintbrush. Cut foods such as cheese to dip in sauces and make prints. Try making finger prints, handprints or even footprints.

- **HIDING** - Hide plastic, washable toys in a bowl of custard or yoghurt. Start by putting the toys so that they can be picked up without touching the food. Then try burying them so you have to put your hands right into the food to get them.
- **DECORATING CAKES** with runny icing, sprinkles and fruit. Try using your fingers instead of a spoon.

OTHER IDEAS:

- **TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC** - Give each teddy a plate and cup. Encourage them to help teddy choose which food they want and then feed the teddy.
- **SHOPS**; Fill some bowls with a variety of foods, provide a shopping bag and money and play shops.
- **FOOD PREPARATION AND COOKING** - Encourage your child to help you to weigh ingredients, mix, chop and decorate food. Use your fingers instead of utensils.

