

# Typical Oral Motor Skill Acquisition

## Newborn

- Oral reflexes present for protection and survival
- Tongue appears flat and cupped
- Jaw, tongue, lips move as one unit
- Newborn develops suck, swallow, breathe pattern for successful bottle/breast feeds

## 4-6 Months

- Munching develops (up and down jaw movement)
- Transfer of food from front to back of tongue for swallow
- Tongue protrusion when swallowing
- Gag reflex (for protection) diminishes
- Swallowing occurs by a suckle-swallow movement or protrusion of the tongue
- Beginning to eat purees

## 7-9 Months

- Lips can close tightly at the corners
- Jaw movements are separate from tongue and lip movements
- Transfer of food from the side to the center of the tongue and vice versa
- Beginning to eat finely chopped food and small pieces of solid foods
- Prefers to feed using hands rather than a spoon

## 10-12 Months

- Upper incisors are used to clean food from the lower lip when drawn inwards
- Lip closure observed when swallowing liquids and solids
- Improved control and graded bite
- Beginning to eat soft, cooked table food (example: soft cookie)
- Able to suck through a straw

## 13-15 Months

- Less spillage when drinking
- Diagonal jaw movements when chewing
- The cheeks and lip corners help keep the food over the grinding surfaces of the teeth
- Tip of the tongue can independently move and explore
- By 15 months, drooling diminishes (except when cutting teeth)

## 16-18 Months

- Minimal loss of food when chewing
- External jaw stabilization utilized to bite the rim of the cup to prevent spillage
- Swallowing occurs with lip closure and an elevated tongue-tip position

## 19-24 Months

- Tongue can clean the lips
- Transfer of food across the midline of the tongue
- Can drink from a straw easily

## 25-36 Months

- Tongue can clean areas between gum and lips
- Jaw openings and movements are graded by thickness of food
- Rotary jaw movement is observed



The following information was created based on the work of: Toomey, K. (2010). *Critical motor & oral motor milestones for feeding*. The Sequential Oral Sensory (SOS) Feeding Approach.