



INTRODUCTION

MORE THAN A MEAL

About this Manual

How to Use this
Manual

Sharing this
Manual with
Others



ABOUT THIS MANUAL

WHAT IS THIS MANUAL ABOUT?

This manual is intended to support the caregivers of infants and children by providing information regarding safe feeding practices. Additionally, this manual provides:

- ① general information on infant and child development
- ② critical milestones for caregivers to monitor
- ③ helpful strategies that support not only feeding but enrich the overall well-being of each and every child

For the purposes of this manual, the terms “infant” and “baby” will be used interchangeably to describe a child between the ages of 0-12 months old. The term “child” will be used to describe children of all ages, but particularly children 12 months and older.



WHO CAN USE THIS MANUAL?

This manual is intended to be used by all caregivers within a child’s life. The term “caregivers” will be used throughout this manual. “Caregivers” can include nurses, doctors, teachers or educators, child care providers, child care directors, parents, family members, therapists, other health professionals, kitchen/cooking staff, janitorial staff and so forth. All of these different individuals can benefit from the information outlined in this manual.

WHAT ARE “BEST FEEDING PRACTICES”?

The term “best practices” refers to the use of knowledge and methods that are considered the most effective and current in a particular field. “Best feeding practices” means the use of current knowledge and methods for best supporting a child’s feeding development. This manual has been created to support caregivers around the world with feeding infants and children with and without disability or medical needs. The material provided in this manual consists of the most up-to-date and effective

approaches for feeding infants and young children. The ideas and strategies shared have been gathered and compiled by a team of skilled specialists. Relevant research and literature from the field has been collected and tailored to fit the unique needs of those using this manual. By sharing current best practice information, we ensure safer mealtimes and healthier outcomes for children, while also providing enrichment for relationships between children and caregivers that enhances total child development.

WHY SHOULD I FOLLOW BEST FEEDING PRACTICES?

When caregivers use best feeding practices, they help ensure that every infant and child receive quality care during mealtimes. This, in turn, positively impacts overall growth and nutrition, thereby reducing the incidence of conditions such as wasting, stunting, malnutrition, dehydration and even death¹. Additionally, by providing each child with a safe and supportive mealtime experience, their capacity for becoming a strong and healthy adult increases. Caregivers who provide thoughtful and supportive feedings not only protect infants and children from adverse health conditions, but they also help develop critical, nurturing child-to-caregiver relationships that are essential for every child to thrive².

WHAT IS INFANT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

Infant and child development is comprised of seven specific areas. These areas take turns developing rapidly and in spurts, especially during the first five years of a child’s life. These areas are commonly referred to as “developmental domains” and the many skills within each domain are called “milestones.”

SEVEN DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS

Adaptive:
(Self-help skills for life)








⇒ Eating and drinking, sleeping, self-feeding, bathing and washing, getting dressed and undressed, toileting, etc.

Communication:
Receptive Language
(Understanding language)
Expressive Language
(Using language to express self)



⇒ Responding to sounds and voices, understanding words, following directions, using gestures such as waving or pointing, using sounds and words to express self, etc.

INTRODUCTION: MORE THAN A MEAL

<p>Fine Motor (Little muscle movements)</p> <p>Gross Motor: (Big muscle movements)</p> 	<p>⇒ Picking up small objects with fingers, eating with hands or utensils, brushing hair, sitting, crawling, standing, walking, running, jumping, climbing, etc.</p>
<p>Cognitive: (Thinking and Learning)</p> 	<p>⇒ Early play and problem solving, understanding cause and effect, finding hidden objects, sorting and matching items, getting objects that are out of reach, finding solutions for problems, learning how to get help from others, etc.</p>
<p>Social-Emotional: (Relationships and interactions with others and the world)</p> 	<p>⇒ Relationships with others, distinguishing familiar and unfamiliar people, showing a strong need for a caregiver, seeking comfort, engaging in activities that provide joy, taking turns, smiling, showing pride in personal accomplishments, etc.</p>
<p>Vision: (Sight and seeing skills)</p> 	<p>⇒ Following objects and faces, gazing at others for culturally appropriate periods of time, locating small items, picking up small objects, seeing objects and people far away, repeating hand movements, etc.</p>
<p>Hearing: (Hearing and listening skills)</p> 	<p>⇒ Responding to sounds and voices, startling with loud sounds, locating the source of noises, responding to your own name, repeating sounds and words made by others, etc.</p>

Each of these areas of development contributes to the others, influencing a child's total skill development. Over time, certain areas will have bursts of growth while others will remain stagnant. This ebb and flow of skills is completely normal and expected as a child grows. Each of these areas works together to help a child thrive³.

WHY SHOULD INFANT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT BE IMPORTANT TO CAREGIVERS?

Strong child development is the foundation of prosperous communities⁴. Therefore, when a caregiver supports the development of a child, he or she is contributing to the health of the entire community. Caregivers are vital to healthy, well-developed children. A well-developed child becomes a healthy, productive and independent adult. The work that caregivers do — the love and care that they provide — is powerful and essential for a child to thrive.

Each of the seven areas of child development include broad time frames indicating at what ages certain milestones typically occur. When a child does not develop a skill or reach a milestone within an expected time frame, more support may be needed to help that child grow. Caregivers should have a basic understanding of development in order to help identify potential problems and solutions early.

The earlier we can address a potential issue in a child's development, the faster and more successful they can be in overcoming it.



WHY DO EARLY RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFANTS AND CHILDREN MATTER?

Human interaction is essential. Every single child deserves to have someone who adores them. This means that early relationships with caregivers are essential for healthy child development. These relationships create connections in a child's brain that allow them to feel safe and secure and to trust and love others. Without the feeling of safety and love, a child literally cannot grow. These are critical life skills for every child. The healthier and more satisfying relationships a child has, the better off he or she will be in the long run⁵. Healthy and happy children lead to healthy and happy adults.



Positive relationships are the primary way to lessen and heal the negative effects of hardships that children experience².

HOW DO FEEDING PRACTICES RELATE TO EARLY, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

In a baby's first 100 days of life, she experiences more than 300 hours of feedings. This means that there are hundreds of opportunities to positively shape a child's life just within the simple context of a meal⁶. Repeated experiences are the most influential and have the greatest potential to shape development⁴. This makes mealtimes the perfect opportunity to spend quality, meaningful time with a child and to make them feel loved — all while feeding their bodies and building strong brains.



Talking to a child while feeding them.



Offering physical comfort for a child when they do not feel well at a meal.



Making mealtimes positive using gentle touch.



Singing to a child during a break from feeding.



Eating with children and offering support during meals.

These are just some of the many ways caregivers can use best feeding practices to promote positive relationships during mealtimes. When caregivers take the extra care to provide best feeding practices, they are creating deeper connections that grow stronger and healthier children within our communities.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

GETTING STARTED

THIS MANUAL HAS TWO PURPOSES:

- ① To be used as a reference tool to assist caregivers with feeding infants and children.
- ② To be used as a training tool to assist caregivers with sharing knowledge and skills with others within their work, home and community.

THIS MANUAL IS BROKEN DOWN INTO FOUR MAIN PARTS THAT INCLUDE 12 CHAPTERS:

- **PART 1:** Feeding Fundamentals
- **PART 2:** Feeding Across the Ages
- **PART 3:** Supporting Positive Feeding Development Across Special Populations
- **PART 4:** Appendix: Strategies, Handouts and Information for Caregivers and Communities

Each chapter consists of multiple sections that break down the information so that it is easier to find. You can find this breakdown of specific content and matching page numbers in the table of contents. Additionally:

- **CHAPTERS 1-8** are the “meat” of the manual, offering an abundance of information.
- **CHAPTER 9** offers extra strategies, techniques, illustrations, handouts and training activities.
- **CHAPTERS 10-12** offer descriptions of special words used in the manual, guidance for finding more resources and another avenue for navigating the manual.

OTHER USEFUL TIPS FOR USING THIS MANUAL

- To limit redundancy, information that applies to several ages and/or conditions has purposefully not been repeated. Caregivers may need to explore multiple chapters to locate more details to meet a child’s specific needs.
- The terms “feedings” and “mealtimes” have been used interchangeably.
- The terms “he” and “she” when discussing infants and children have been used interchangeably.
- Many picture symbols have been used to help link similar content and increase understanding.
- Manual pages have been color coded to assist with easier navigation of information.

WAYS TO USE THIS BOOK

METHOD

STEPS TO TAKE

1

START: Table of Contents

- ① → Choose a PART
- ② → Choose a CHAPTER
- ③ → Choose a SECTION

2

START: Table of Contents

- ① → Locate PART 1
- ② → Review any/all Fundamental SECTIONS

3

START: Table of Contents

- ① → Locate PART 2
- ② → Choose an Age Range
- ③ → Review any and all corresponding SECTIONS

4

START: Table of Contents

- ① → Locate PART 3
- ② → Choose a Diagnosis or Feeding Challenge
- ③ → Review any and all corresponding SECTIONS

5

START: Common Feeding Challenges and Solutions Quick Charts (Appendix 9M)

- ① → Review any/all corresponding CHAPTERS or SECTIONS

6

START: For locating specific content by alphabetical order

- ① → CHAPTER 12 (INDEX)

7

START: For additional strategies, handouts, activities, meanings of words, resources

- ① → CHAPTERS 9-12

8

Read the manual in its entirety from start to finish.

SHARING THIS MANUAL WITH OTHERS



WHO AND WHERE TO SHARE?

This manual is intended to be used by all caregivers within a child’s life. Some of the information in this manual may be of interest to other health care workers, family members of children and community members. Because of this, certain pages in this manual have been created for copying and sharing with others. Depending on the needs of the individual, some may benefit from reading an entire chapter or section, or some may find it useful to refer to only certain handouts, illustrations, charts or activities.

FINAL THOUGHTS

People learn best when offered information in a variety of different ways such as written form or words, pictures, listening, watching, hands-on activities, etc. This manual offers written visual content as well as certain hands-on strategies.

However, to best support new learners, we recommend using the following sharing steps:

- ① Connect before you correct a learner.
- ② Explain the main information points, including how to do something and why.
- ③ Show the learner how: people often learn best with hands-on practice.
- ④ Practice with the learner and discuss how it went and how they feel afterward.



***Remember:** Everyone wants to do what is best for a child. Before we correct a behavior that seems “wrong” or unsafe, it’s best to first connect (create a positive connection or interaction) with the learner before trying to help them change the behavior. When people are treated with respect and kindness from the beginning, they will be much more open to changing.*

