



Snacks for Teethers

First foods and snacks

Teething usually begins around 6 months of age. Teething can start as early as 3 months or begin as late as 12 months. Some families will know when they are ready to begin offering solid food to their teether and what those first foods should be, but others will be sorting through conflicting advice from extended family and friends, and may ask for your input.

Children under 12 months are developmentally capable of feeding themselves by teething on pieces of food as well. This minimizes “food battles” with spoon-wielding adults and helps teethingers learn and love a wide variety of tastes and textures. This sets the stage for independence, healthy appetites, and joyful eating habits for life. Offer a slice of raw veggie or fruit that can stand up to teething, like mango or celery. You can also put the food in a mesh feeder, this also helps reduce the risk of choking. Whatever method the parents’ of your charge decides to use, be sure to stay close and let them explore!

Here’s a tip- if your charge’s parents want to provide their teether with pureed food, to support the transition mix the milk your charge is accustomed to with the food. Gradually increase the amounts of pureed food to help their digestive systems adjust.

Fabulous finger foods for curious teethingers

Snack time and meal time are important development opportunities for the teether in your care. Eating foods with fun textures and tastes encourage the teethingers in your care to self feed, eat with their hands, which improves hand-eye coordination and pincer grasp, supporting the development of fine motor skills. *Pincer grasp* is the development of the pinching fingers with the pointer finger and the thumb squeezing to grasp an object, like small bits of food.

The teether in your care does not actually need need teeth to chew. Babies use their gums to mash until their molars appear, which happens between 12-18 months of age. Remember that finger food should be soft and easy to chew and that every baby is different. You can and should cut up the bites of food you’re sharing with your charge based on their ability to chew.

Snack ideas

Vegetables and some fruit should be cooked so they’re soft enough to mush easily and everything should be cut into tiny pieces. Sizes changes as the teether’s ability to chew evolves.

- Ripe mango
- Blueberries, halved
- Ripe kiwi
- Banana



Develop Your Skills:

Snacks for Teethers

- Avocado
- Soft boiled potato
- Grapes usually peeled and halved cut lengthwise or smaller pieces

As your teether ages, their ability to chew evolves and they get started on solids, you can begin to provide them cold foods to soothe their gums. Note that frozen food, teethingers, etc. can potentially damage your teether's gums. Offer them chilled, not frozen, fruit in a mesh bag, or a large carrot, not a baby carrot! Be sure to hold one end of the carrot as the child in your care gnaws on the other end, the temperature and pressure will help soothe teething gums.

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This tip sheet was developed by the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), an alliance of nannies, care workers and housecleaners working together for rights and dignity. We invite you to join us! NDWA members get special benefits and access to trainings on topics like this one. Visit www.domesticworkers.org to find out more.

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