

SELF CARE EATING MEALS

HIGH CHAIRS INFORMATION SHEET

Mealtimes are an important aspect of family life. Children begin to develop self-feeding skills from birth. Self-feeding is a very complex task and it is common for children to have difficulty using cutlery to feed themselves. It usually takes until a child is 7 years old before they can successfully use cutlery to feed themselves without being too messy. There are a variety of tools that can be used to support children with mealtimes if they continue to find these skills challenging. Many of these are readily available and are not seen as specialist equipment.

POSITIONING AND POSTURE

- It is important that your child is well supported when they are learning any new skill. Initially ensure your child is well supported in a high chair or on your lap. You can use cushions, commercially available inserts or rolled up towels to help your child to stay sitting up straight in their high chair.
- To help to develop communication skills over mealtimes it is recommended that you position your child at eye level therefore it is important to think about the height of the high chair. Some commercially available high chairs allow you to adjust the height of the chair which may be useful if you intend to feed your baby in different places such as from the sofa, dining table or at a breakfast bar.
- High chairs with footrests support your child to develop good sitting posture with their feet flat on the footrest. Having their feet on a footrest when sitting increases stability and encourages your child to sit upright without slouching (sacral sitting).
- Buying a high chair with a backrest that changes angles from fully upright to reclined means you can adjust the position of this in line with your child's development. When your child first starts using their high chair they may not be able to sit in it with the backrest fully upright without falling to the sides or too far forward but as their core stability improves and they can sit upright unsupported you can put the backrest upright.
- Consideration should be given to the type of harness on the highchair; if it cannot be tightened enough it will not support your child's position when they are smaller. If the highchair does not have a groin strap/ 3 or 5 point harness or a pommel the child may slide down.

