



Taste and Smell

Things To Look Forward To

Here are some ideas for children newborn to three.

Heads Up (Newborn – 1 month) - Plenty of fresh air and sunshine are good for infants. Put some fresh flowers in your baby's room. Peel an orange, and put the peel in a small dish in baby's room. Feeding time is a very special time. Smell his hair and cheeks. Just as your baby has his own smell, so do you. Your baby knew your personal fragrance shortly after his birth. Hold and cuddle him as you feed him. He will enjoy your smell as well as the taste of his breast milk or formula. He knows the difference between salty, bitter, sweet and acidic.

The Looker (1-4 months) - Your baby may show an interest in holding her own bottle. Continue to hold and cuddle her while feeding. Don't be tempted to prop her bottle. Peel an orange, and see if your baby shows any indication that she smells the fragrance. Does she turn her head toward the piece of fruit? If you place the peel near her mouth, does she try to suck on it? Your baby's mouth is where a great deal of learning takes place. She uses it to get nourishment and to explore her world. Make sure her toys are clean and free of sharp edges. Make sure they are too big to be swallowed (bigger than two inches.)

Creepers-Crawlers (4-8 months) – When your doctor says it is OK to introduce solid foods and when your baby has at least four teeth, you can do a simple taste test with banana slices, crackers, cereal and soft cheese. Let him choose and taste what he wants. When you introduce new solid foods, does he notice that bananas smell different from bread? Does he like the taste of his cereal? Does he like the feel of these new finger foods?

The Cruiser (8-12 months) – Take a smell walk in the stroller. Stop to smell the flowers and the pine needles along the way. Have you noticed that when your baby is hungry or thirsty, she will eat or drink just about anything you give her regardless of how bad it tastes or smells? You have to be careful what she is exposed to. She will try the cat food and the potted plants. Make sure your home is baby-proofed. Offer a variety of finger foods as soon as she can handle them. Be prepared for a mess, but remember she is not making it on purpose. This is just another one of those learning experiences.

The Walker (12-18 months) – Your baby is still using his fingers and taste buds to experiment and learn. He has been doing a form of finger painting with his food for some time. Now he may be ready for the real thing. Make up a batch of homemade finger paint and see what he does. Don't be surprised if he still want to taste it first. Give your toddler an orange and talk about the color, texture, shape and smell. Slowly peel the orange and smell the inside. Let him feel the sections of the orange as you pull them apart. Taste the orange and talk about how it tastes—sweet, sour, cold or warm.

The Doer (18-24 months) – Taste test using a cupcake pan filled with different foods covered with plastic lids. She will lift the lids and try foods such as seedless orange sections, pudding, etc. Mealtime can be a real challenge at this age. A good rule of thumb is to let her eat as much as she needs from a variety of healthy foods.

The Tester (24-36 months) – Your child has more discriminating taste. Place small amounts of food in a cup cake pan (lemon, apple, pineapple, onion, sugar, cinnamon, flour, and brown sugar.) Can you predict the foods he will choose? Conduct the sniff test. Were there certain smells that he did not like? Peel an orange, and look at it under a magnifying glass. Then eat it. Take your toddler on a smell walk. He could close his eyes and guess much like he did with the texture walk, or her could keep this eyes open and tell you what he smells and what category the smell goes in—sweet, sour, and so forth.