

## Cutlery, cups and plates

In order for your child to become more skilled at using cutlery it is important for them to be seated at the table for mealtimes. Be sure that your child is seated with their feet firmly placed on the floor, ideally the position of hips, knees and ankles at 90° angles. The height of the work surface must be the distance from the floor to the base of your child's elbow when bent to 90°.

If you have concerns about your child's ability to use cutlery, use this advice Sheet. If you have not seen improvement after three months, please contact Integrated Children's Services.

Encourage your child to hold the cutlery correctly....remember the following

- Holding with index finger pointing down. This helps to apply more pressure
- Use of sawing action not tearing action
- Keep shoulders and elbows down. If they are kept up, they will become tired

### Strategies and advice

- Make sure that their feet are supported, either on the floor or on a step stool for mealtimes
- Allow them to help with simple food preparation e.g. cut up a banana for a fruit salad
- Start with soft foods that the child can push a knife through e.g. boiled potatoes
- Then teach the child to cut foods that require a sawing action such as soft meats
- Using a knife and fork together in a complex skill as each hand does a different action but must coordinate together. Emphasise the different actions of each hand – the fork to hold food still, and the knife to cut. This can be practised using large soft foods such as a slice of bread.

Practice using a knife and fork outside of mealtimes during games such as:

### Mars bar games (or banana)

Throw a dice, each time you get a six, cut off a piece of mars bar. Carry on cutting pieces until the next person throws a six.

### Playdoh

- Rolling out into different shapes and cutting out
- Shape playdoh into a 'pizza' or a 'beef-burger' and place on plate
- Ask child to cut it into 4, 6 or 8 pieces. The child can only use the knife and fork to touch the 'food', not his or her fingers
- Encourage the child to use their knife and fork to turn the 'food' round so it is in the best position for cutting

- Pick up each piece of food with the fork and push off into container using the knife.
- Shape playdoh into 'peas' and place on the plate. Pick up each 'pea' with the fork and push off into a container with the knife
- Make a 'whole meal' out of playdoh, made up of different shape to be cut, picked up and placed into the container using only the knife and fork
- Encourage them to put the knife and fork down on plate in between (as if waiting for him/her to finish a mouthful) so they get more practice at how to pick up and hold cutlery correctly each time

### Sandwiches

Make sandwiches together and cut them into different shapes.

### Drinks

- Do not over fill glasses
- Use cups/glasses with smaller diameter
- Consider travel cups/mugs, drinking bottles
- Use mugs with larger handles

### Plates

- Consider high sided plates
- Use of a placemat, or damp cloth to prevent plate from moving

### Useful suppliers

**[www.fledglings.org.uk](http://www.fledglings.org.uk)**

**[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)**