

PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE WITH CUP DRINKING

Self-care skills including drinking are very much a part of our everyday lives. It is important to foster an interest, as well as your child's cooperation at an early age, for independence in self-care tasks for several reasons including:

- Self-esteem development
- Active physical participation
- Therapeutic benefits

Never miss an opportunity to encourage your child to be independent. Because they occur daily, self-care tasks can be practiced on a regular basis.

To Promote Independence

- Recognize and encourage any attempt or efforts your child makes to help with/complete the tasks. Encourage and praise them, no matter how small the attempt.
- Establish a place and routine for encouraging self-care independence.
- Allow time for your child time to respond and attempt to participate or complete the task.
- With repetition and practice, your child will begin to anticipate the next step and you will be able to withdraw your cues.
- Consider the position your child is in during the task. They need to feel physically secure in order to participate – feet flat on floor, knees and hips bent.
- Act as a model for your child. This is most easily done by sitting in front of your child.
- Provide verbal cues for self-care. Talk with your child while completing the task.
- Backward chaining may help. Ask your child to assist with the last step in the sequence. Gradually add steps until your child is able to complete the tasks independently.

Drinking from a Cup

Encouraging independent self-feeding can be a balance between adequate nutritional intake and physical independence. Public Health Sudbury and Districts has some helpful handouts available on "Introducing solid foods," and "Texture of complimentary foods."

Encouraging cup readiness:

- Encourage your child to bring their hands to their mouth
- Encourage your child to hold their bottle independently

Steps in the development of drinking skills:

- Child picks up and drinks from cup (some spilling)
- Child drinks from cup without help
- Child sucks through a straw

General Strategies:

- Exposure to open cup opportunities is important for development. Cups should be small so their hands can hold onto the cup.
 - Examples of small open cup:
 - A plastic “ounce” glass
 - Small plastic or silicone cup:
 - This resource is available electronically with links to an example of the products: [ezpz Mini Cup](#)



- This resource is available electronically with links to an example of the products: [Small open cups](#)



- When first learning to drink from an open cup, start with putting a small amount of liquid into a small child sized cup. Add more liquid as their skills develop.
- Provide modelling and hand over hand assistance as well to show the child how to slowly tip back the cup.
- If the child has difficulty controlling how much to tip back the cup and the liquid spills out too quickly, this liquid could be thickened to a smoothie consistency by adding applesauce to apple juice, or yogurt to milk. This will help slow down the flow of the liquid and allow the child to have more control. Gradually decrease thickening as they gain more control.
- Practice with straw is also recommended to help develop their oral-motor skills.

- Instead of regular sippy cups, also consider trying different cups with lids as the lid can help control the flow of the liquid. There can be a trial and error period until you can find a cup that the child likes. This resource is available electronically with links to examples of the products:

- [Munchkin 7oz Miracle® 360° Cup](#)



- [Two handled cups with recessed lid: The lids can help control the flow of the liquid while children are learning how to tilt their cup back.](#)

- *Note: This cup doesn't have a screw-on lid so lid will fall out if thrown.*



****Please note that this handout reviews general strategies that may not be appropriate for all children. Direct supervision is important during feeding to ensure safety. Consult with your family physician or nurse practitioner if you have concerns regarding your child's feeding skills.***