

## E is for **EVERYDAY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

### So Many Ways to Learn: **Meals or Snacks**

In addition to nourishment, meals and snacks offer important opportunities to build positive relationships and provide repeated opportunities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to practice important skills. For example, older infants practice using their hands and fingers to pick up food and bring it to their mouths. They show you what they want by pointing to food or drink items. Toddlers or preschoolers can practice using spoons, forks, or other utensils to feed themselves. Toddlers can use words to ask for things they want or label food, drinks, and objects. Preschoolers can help set the table or put the dishes in the sink. They can practice serving foods by scooping with large spoons or opening containers. They can also ask for things they want using longer sentences or describe features of food, drinks, or objects.

#### Possible Skills to Practice While Having Meals or Snacks

##### Older Infants (6 to 12 Months)

- Looks at food, drinks, or other mealtime or snack objects that are named
- Repeats sounds or uses single words to label food, drinks, or objects
- Uses gestures or sign language to ask for food or drinks
- Lifts arms to make room for the high chair tray
- Uses fingers to pick up food and bring it to mouth
- Drinks from a cup with a lid

##### Toddlers (1 to 3 Years)

- Follows simple directions like, "Put the spoon on the table."
- Uses phrases (2 to 4 words) or short sentences to describe food, drinks, or objects
- Uses phrases (2 to 4 words) or short sentences to ask for food, drinks, or objects
- Uses a spoon to scoop food and bring it to mouth
- Drinks from a cup with a lid
- Uses a napkin or washcloth to wipe the table
- Climbs down from the high chair

##### Preschoolers (3 to 5 Years)

- Follows directions like, "Get the spoon and put it on the table."
- Counts the number of spoons needed to set the table
- Uses a serving spoon to scoop foods
- Screws or unscrews lids
- Uses a fork or spoon to feed self
- Drinks from an open cup
- Gives food or an object to someone who asks for it

#### Remember the 3R's:

Relationships, repetition, and routines (the 3R's) are the foundation for supporting brain development and early learning.