

# Ideas & Tips for 9 months to 3 years

## Eat Well

### To help your child learn new tastes:

- > Try new foods that are soft, easy to swallow & sliced into small pieces
  - Well-cooked vegetables: spinach or broccoli
  - Mashed/pureed fruit: peach, cantaloupe, apricot
  - Lean meats: skinless poultry, pork, lean beef
- > Try foods with no added salt, sugar, or seasoning
- > It may take 10 to 15 tries over a few months for them to like a new food
- > Talk to your healthcare provider about when and how to introduce peanut butter

### To help your child develop healthy eating habits:

- > Feed them when they show you signs of hunger:
  - Kicking and squirming
  - Sucking or smacking lips
- > Limit screens and other sounds during meals so they stay interested in their food
- > Eat together as a family as often as you can
- > Be sure they are sitting & with an adult when eating

## Play Together

- > Try fun indoor play: dancing or follow the leader
- > Enjoy fresh air playing outside! Make sure to use sun protection like sunscreen, hats, and loose clothes

### To limit and manage screen time:

- > Turn off screens any time they are not in use
- > For children over 2, limit screen time to 1 hour per day and watch kid-friendly shows together to help them understand what they see

## Sleep More

### To make a bedtime routine for you and your child:

- > Read your favorite book, listen to soft music, or sing together
- > Give them a bath

### To help with bedtime separation:

- > When your child turns 1, let them take one or two things to bed, like blankets or stuffed animals
- > Make sure these are safe, without choking hazards

# Resources

## Somerville Hub

[somervillehub.org](http://somervillehub.org)

## American Academy of Pediatrics

[healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)

## Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

[mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/food/wic](http://mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/food/wic)

Somerville Non-Emergency 311 Service Center  
Dial 311



### Remember: Not all children are the same!

The information here should not take the place of advice from your doctor or health care provider. Ask them for additional information about your child.



## SHAPE UP UNDER 5

Promoting healthy growth of all children in Somerville from birth through 5 years, with consistent messaging for caregivers and families, by organizations that support the wellbeing of young children.

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# Small Steps to Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds

## 9 months to 3 years



**Eat Well**  
**Play Together**  
**Sleep More**

## 9 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR

**In addition to breastmilk or formula, include solid foods each day**

**Introduce new textures:**

- ✓ Mashed and strained foods
- ✓ Lumpy foods
- ✓ Soft finger-foods (bite-sized)

Avoid foods that can cause choking: hotdogs, nuts or seeds, raw vegetables, or fruit chunks



## 1 TO 3 YEARS

**At meal time...**

- ✓ **Keep it simple.** Offer choices from the family meal
- ✓ Include fruits, vegetables & iron-rich foods (beans, eggs, and lean meats)
- ✓ Use plain whole milk until age 2, then switch to low-fat milk

**Your child is sweet enough!**

Try to limit juice (even 100%) to half a cup each day

## 9 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR

- ✓ Join your child in play and learn from each other
- ✓ **Let your child move** outside of the stroller and high chair

## 1 TO 3 YEARS

- ✓ **Turn off screens until age 2**, then limit to less than 1 hour each day
- ✓ Play can be both indoors and outdoors



**Habits form quickly at this age!**

Keep sleeping areas and play time free from screens

## 9 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR

- ✓ Your child needs **12-16 hours** of sleep each day, including naps
- ✓ Place your child on their back for all naps and at bed time
- ✓ Children should start to learn to fall asleep on their own



## 1 TO 3 YEARS

- ✓ Your child needs **11-14 hours** of sleep each day, including naps
- ✓ **Bedtime can be hard.** Make sure your child knows you are there, and remind them that it is time for sleep

**Calming routines are very helpful for your child!**

Try to start one for both bedtime and naptime

# Eat Well

# Play Together

# Sleep More