

## Tips for Infant/Toddler Families in creating learning opportunities during everyday routines.

### Mealtime

- Allow children as much independence as possible when eating. If your infant wants to help hold the bottle, let them. If your toddler wants to hold the spoon and try to self-feed, let them have their own spoon to hold and try while you continue to feed.
- During meals talk to your child about what they are eating. Talk about things like hot, cold, hard, soft, squishy, sweet, sour, etc.... based on the food for the meal.
- Narrate the mealtime experience using “first then” statements (referring to the order of steps to complete a meal) example: “let’s sit down at the table. Now it is time to eat our yummy food! All done? First let’s clean up from breakfast then we will play with your giraffe toy!”
- At the end of the meal, give your child a damp washcloth (just containing water) to clean their “hands, face, and place.” model this behavior for them before giving them the washcloth. Your child will play with the cloth initially then will eventually begin to experiment with wiping up their spaces as this is repeated with every meal.

### Anytime

- Always tell your child what you are doing throughout the caregiving routines. For example, “I am going to pick you up now.” “It’s time to go to your crib” “I am leaving now, but grandma will take care of you until I am back” etc.... Talk to your infant and toddler even if they don’t respond or seem to know what you are saying. This is how children learn language and build trust.
- Specifically acknowledge all the awesome things your child can do. “You brought me your toy; you’re sharing”
- Once your child is over a year, stick to a fairly consistent routine for meals and naps so your child can expect what is going to happen next. Infants need to create their own schedules that adults follow.
- Allow your toddler lots of time to explore sensory items such as: edible paints, non-toxic play do, cornstarch and water, etc....
- Allow for lots of unstructured play time throughout the day.
- Sing songs, play music and dance with your child.
- Read books regularly, at least daily, and allow them to explore the books (even with their mouths-board or cloth books are best for this age).
  - Allow your child to touch and interrupt you (don’t worry if you only get through the first two pages). Always tell your children who wrote and illustrated the book. Ensure books are available for your child to look at on their own. This is the best thing you can do to support your child’s reading skills and development.

## Outside Time

- Read the signs in your neighborhood when walking or when driving in the car.
- Tell your child when you are turning left or right in the car so they can feel what left and right means.
- Go outside a lot, plan short walks, and visit the playground so your child has lots of opportunities to develop and use their large muscles, play with them.
- Take your child on safe outings when you can such as the beach, park, hike, lake, open air market, farmers market, a drive around the city, drive through parties etc.
- Provide safe opportunities to explore nature with their senses. (bare feet in grass, sitting in sand, holding a ribbon toy on a windy day, etc.)
- Model positive social behaviors for your child. Encourage positive (and safe) social interaction with new people