

Messy play food chart

Date	Stage	Food type	Response to session	Future plan
	Pretend food play			
	Dry food play			
	Wet food play Wet firm			
	Wet tacky			
	Wet semi solid			
	Wet liquid			
	Wet mixed textures			

0-19 Health and Wellbeing Service



Guidelines for messy play with food

- substances used in Messy Play activities are suited to the child's swallowing abilities, in case they try to eat them
- the child should be comfortable with each stage before progressing to the next

Stages in Food Play Progression

1. **Pretend food play** - play shop and tea party using toy food of different textures - plastic, wood and material. Imaginative play using favourite toys at a tea party.
2. **Dry food play** - progressing from coarse to increasingly fine dry textures - cereals (Rice Krispies, shredded wheat, cornflakes, porridge oats) uncooked pasta, dried beans and peas, hard sweets, lentils, flour, rice cakes.

Transition from dry to wet consistencies can be aided by use of utensils, gloves as required.

3. **Wet food play** - firm wet textures through to liquids and mixed textures. For example:
 - firm wet consistencies (bread dough, marzipan)
 - wet, tacky consistencies (cooked pasta, lentils soaked overnight, semolina added to cold water, instant mashed potato)
 - wet, semi-solid consistencies (set custard, jelly, mousse, angel delight, yoghurt, jam)
 - wet, liquid consistencies (pouring custards, pouring cream, treacle, melted chocolate)
 - wet, mixed textures (pasta and sauce, rice pudding, pizza with a topping, cream, tomato sauce, custard, treacle, chocolate spread and yoghurt mixed with hundreds and thousands, cooked cold spaghetti, biscuits)

Equipment ideas

Common household utensils and simple toys can be used to further develop the possibilities of messy play eg: toy animals, vehicles, moulds, rolling pins, blunt knives, sieves, pastry cutters, measuring jugs, funnels, balls to roll, different sized containers, fruit and vegetable printing shapes.

Top tips for messy play

- sessions should have a predictable beginning and end (collecting materials, and cleaning the table, washing hands)
- prepare and set up the activity to reduce clearing up time afterwards
- help model play possibilities, but support the free play of the child
- allow plenty of time
- wear old clothes or few clothes
- it should be fun and messy in a stress-free environment
- join in!

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net

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