Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Quality Care - for you, with you

Children's Occupational Therapy

Using Cutlery

It is easier to practise cutting with soft foods, such as fish fingers, egg, boiled potato, well-cooked vegetables. You could slice 'round' food (such as potatoes or sausages) in half to stop them rolling round the plate.

Try guiding your child's movements by placing your hands over theirs while cutting. This allows your child to feel the necessary movements for cutting.

Teach one step at a time; let your child master one step before attempting the next. For example:

- stab play-doh balls with the fork
- saw backwards and forwards with the knife
- use the knife and fork together.

Practice using a knife and fork during a fun activity to avoid frustration. Let your child try to cut play-doh or cookie dough.

At mealtimes, start by asking your child to use their knife and fork for just one item, then gradually increase the amount they do as their skill and confidence increases.

Look at how your child is holding their knife and fork. Their hands should be pointing down towards the plate. To increase the pressure they can apply when cutting, show them how to point their index fingers down the shaft of the knife and fork.

A good sitting position at the table is important. Your child should be at the right height in relation to the table with their feet supported, for example with a stool under their feet.

Have the right tools for the job! A serrated knife is easier for cutting meat and other tough textures, while a non-serrated knife is easier for spreading butter on bread.

Ensure the cutlery is the correct size for your child. Child-sized or cutlery with wider handles is easier to hold and use. Junior Caring Cutlery (available from online retailers) has shaped handles that promote appropriate hand placement.

If your child is right-handed, they should hold their knife in their right hand. If your child is left-handed, allow them to choose which hand to hold their knife in.

Online Resources:

https://www.pinterest.co.uk/funspot123/self-care/