Complementary Feeding and Neuromuscular Development

The normal pattern of neuromuscular development necessary to support complementary feedings has been well-described. Adequate suck-swallow coordination to support liquid feeding is usually present between 34 and 35 weeks of gestation in healthy infants. Phasic biting disappears between 3 and 4 months of age and rooting diminishes between 5 and 6 months of age. With improved stability of the trunk, infants at this age are capable of participating in complementary feedings. Stability of the trunk is often underrated as an important factor contributing to an infant's ability to progress to complementary foods. Finger coordination is generally adequate by 6 to 7 months of age to permit finger-feeding. By 12 months of age, rotary chewing is well-established with controlled, sustained biting, and most infants are capable of spoon-feeding themselves.

Research Question
Although the pattern of neuromuscular development to support oral feeding has been well-described, the questions of those external factors that enhance neuromuscular development and the epidemiology with standard deviations in the ages of acquisition of these important neuromuscular milestones merit additional study.

RONALD E. KLEINMAN, MD
Pediatric Gastrointestinal and Nutrition Unit
Massachusetts General Hospital
Harvard Medical School
Boston, MA 02114

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Ronald E. Kleinman
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