

Occupational Therapy Service Using Cutlery

Please find advice of how to support your child in learning how to use cutlery successfully:

- Practice using a knife on its own first, without the use of a fork at the same time. Encourage the child to cut toast / sandwiches / banana etc.
- Encourage the child to help to make a fruit salad / fruit kebabs to practice knife skills, holding food with their non-dominant hand and using the dominant hand to cut with a butter knife.
- To reduce any stressors around using cutlery, it is recommended to practice this skill away from meal times.
- Use verbal reminders to encourage moving the knife in a sawing motion e.g. “forward and back, forward and back”.
- When the child is a bit more comfortable with using a knife, try using the fork, again using verbal prompts to “stab (with the fork), forward back, forward back (with the knife)”.
- If the child will tolerate hand-over-hand assistance, try this. Encourage the child to hold the cutlery and then place your hands over theirs to demonstrate the movements necessary.
- To encourage a more functional grasp of cutlery, encourage the child to put their index fingers at the base of the cutlery as shown in the picture. This will encourage more control. Using a visual prompt such as a sticker or a piece of blue tac at the base of the cutlery can also help as a reminder for finger placement.
- Using specialist cutlery such as ‘nanas manners’ or adult ‘caring cutlery’ can also assist children with the positioning and coordination of using cutlery. These are widely available online.

