

## CHILDREN'S OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE SHEET

### KNIFE AND FORK SKILLS

Learning to use a knife and fork is best practised away from meal times, so your child does not have the additional pressures of time and hunger.

Using **play dough** is a good place to start, progressing on to helping prepare foods such as bananas or a cucumber for a salad.

Try **junior caring cutlery** as it has a groove showing where to place index finger.

### START WITH THE KNIFE

- Using plasticine or play dough to **roll out a sausage shape**. Use a cutting board or an old firm table mat at this stage, rather than a plate.
- Hold the **knife in dominant hand** (*unless you do not do this for cultural reasons*) with **correct index finger positioning**.
- Use the hand to keep the play dough steady and use a forward and backward action to cut.
- **Practise** until your child gets into the swing of this.



### USING A KNIFE AND FORK TOGETHER

- With the pieces of playdough on the table, get your child to hold the **fork in their non dominant hand** and retrieve one piece by 'stabbing' the fork into the piece of play dough. **Adult to use the knife to slide the piece of playdough into the pot.** Practise until your child gets into the swing of this.
- Now the **knife and fork together**. **Hold the fork in the non-dominant hand**. Place 'pointy finger' (index finger) on the back of the fork with the remaining fingers wrapped around the handle. Hold the knife with the same grasp with the dominant hand, i.e. pointy finger on back edge of knife.
- Push the fork into the playdough sausage and hold it still.
- Place the blade of the knife near the fork but not against it. Cut through the playdough sausage with a **forward and backward action**.
- Slide the piece of playdough off the fork using the knife.



Once your child can do the above, get your child to cut easy-to-cut foods using the knife and fork.