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Activity: **Exploring with Taste and Smell**

Exploring with Taste and Smell

Take advantage of this time at home to explore different tastes and smells with your child. Use what you have in your kitchen to compare and contrast different flavors and scents.

Materials

Whatever you have in your kitchen. This is a good time to explore all your spices and condiments!

Instructions

Pick 2 or more flavors to explore with your child. Try to have more than one item representing each category, so your child can have multiple examples of what “salty” or “bitter” means. If your child isn’t able to taste the foods, you can pick items that are strongly scented and talk about the scents rather than the flavors. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Salty: potato chips, pretzels, crackers, French fries, bacon, broth

Sweet: honey, maple syrup, most fruits (strawberries, grapes, pears, etc.), jam

Bitter: dark/unsweetened chocolate, bitter greens (spinach, kale, chard, etc.), citrus peel, olives

Sour: lemon, lime, vinegar, pickles, buttermilk, rhubarb, plain unsweetened yogurt

Savory/Umami: mushrooms, soy sauce, fish sauce, green tea, cheddar cheese

Spicy: mild salsa, pepper, raw garlic, dried mustard

Feel free to use the above categories, or look around your kitchen and pick different ones based on what you have available. For example, if you have an orange and a lime you can touch, smell, and taste them with your child while talking about citrus.

Your child can participate in touching each item so he/she knows what it is like as a whole and in pieces (fruit, vegetables). He/she can also learn about movements like shaking (spice jars), tearing (greens), and dipping (chips/dips/sauces).

Adapting the Activity

If your child can only eat pureed textures, try adding something to a mildly flavored puree to give it a different flavor. For example, add some cheddar cheese or pepper to plain mashed potatoes. Remember to give your child lots of time to smell the foods as well. Smelling is very closely related to tasting.

If your child needs more of a challenge, you can help them create a like/dislike chart to keep track of what flavors they liked and what flavors they didn't like. You can make a simple tactile survey chart using puffy stickers, sticky dots, different color/shaped pieces of fabric or cardboard, etc. to keep score! Have other members of the family taste the foods, too, and help your child record their reactions on the chart. Remember that we all need several opportunities with a food to decide if we like it or not!