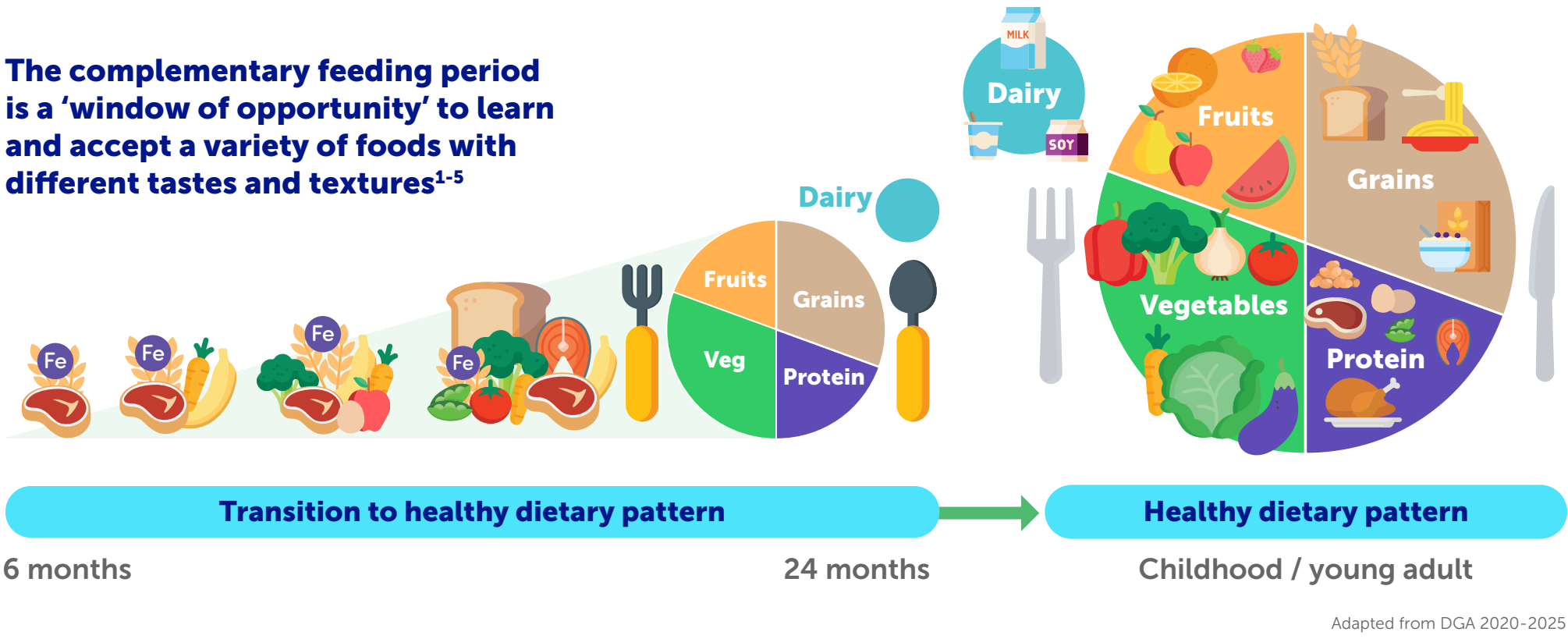


Learning to Eat: How Food Preferences and Eating Habits are Formed Early in Life

Exposure to new foods is most effective for acceptance before 2 years of age

The complementary feeding period is a ‘window of opportunity’ to learn and accept a variety of foods with different tastes and textures¹⁻⁵



Introduction of complementary foods to address infant-specific nutritional and developmental needs

From 6 months of age, other foods besides milk* are recommended to be introduced in the infant’s diet⁶

Developmentally ready

Infants can sit upright, balance and control head movements (usually from around 6 months of age)⁵

Start with nutrient-dense complementary foods

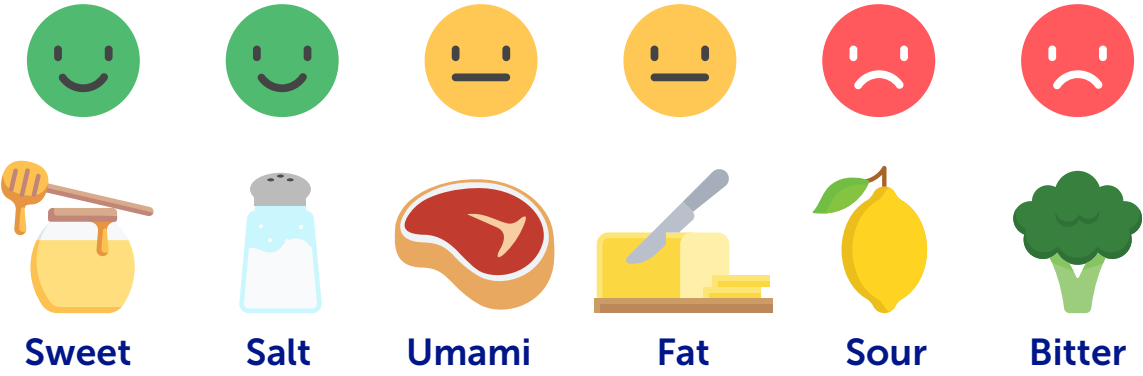
e.g., iron-rich foods, such as iron-fortified infant cereals, meats and seafood rich in heme iron⁷⁻⁸

With the introduction of complementary food, infants and young children learn different types of foods with a variety of new food textures and tastes. Foods should therefore be **age and developmentally appropriate**⁷⁻⁸

*Complementary foods

Taste development during complementary feeding

Limited innate taste preferences can be trained and learnt^{4,9}



Learning unfamiliar food tastes^{1,3,4,10,11}

Repeated exposure can lead to better acceptance of new foods

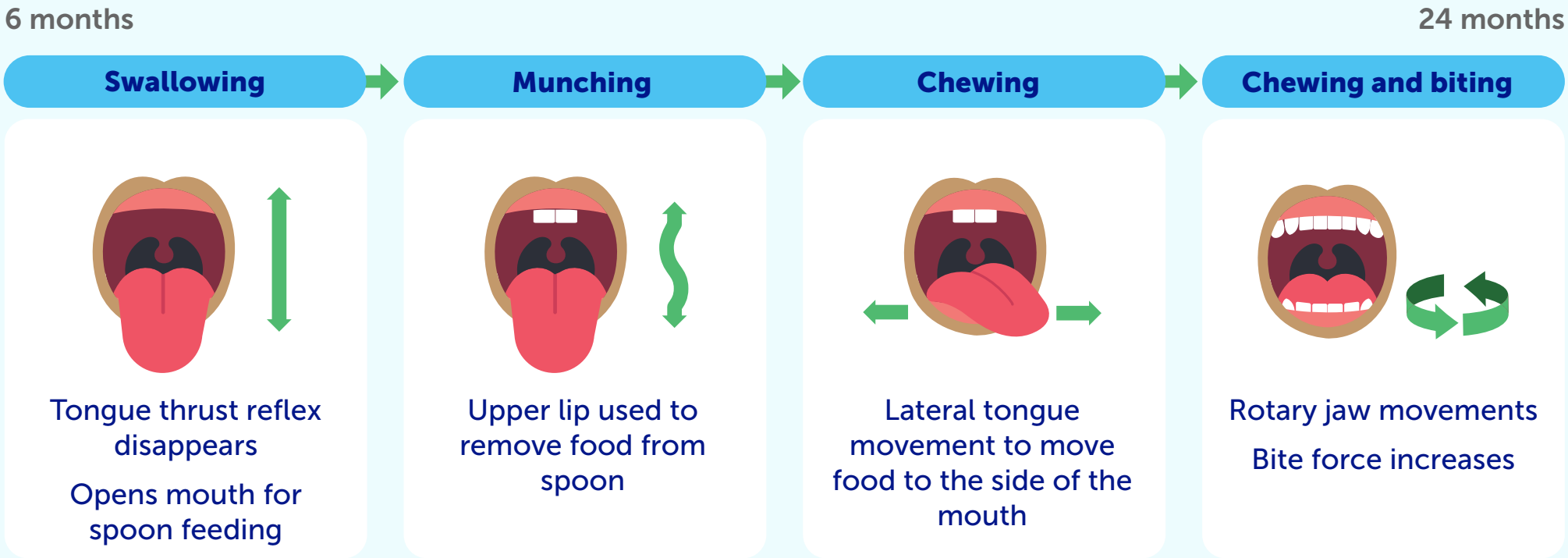
Exposure to one or more fruit or vegetables over **8-10** days increases their acceptance

Exposure to new foods and tastes is most effective for acceptance of new foods before the age of 2, and even more so during the early stages of complementary feeding

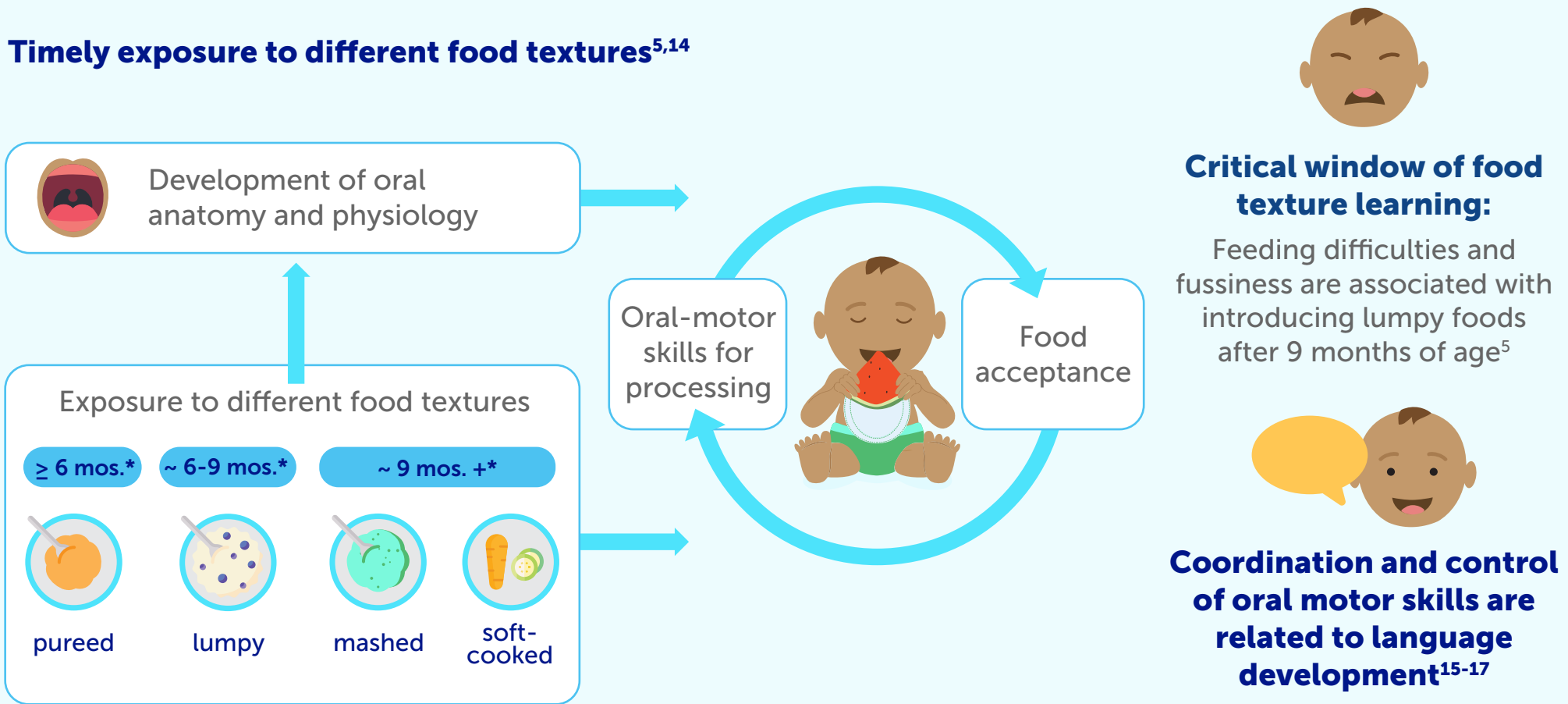
How do infants learn new food textures?

Developmental stage and exposure to different food textures influence the acceptance of new food textures^{5,12}

Oral motor development^{*13}



Timely exposure to different food textures^{5,14}



Early exposure to a variety of food textures is not only necessary for a more varied diet, but also promotes the development of oral motor skills and eating behaviour, as well as the gradual acceptance of increasingly complex textures.^{5,12}

The complementary feeding period is a ‘window of opportunity’ to learn and accept a variety of foods with different textures and tastes that will help shape healthy eating habits into later childhood and beyond. The timely introduction of age and developmentally appropriate complementary foods should therefore be encouraged.

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