



FEEDING YOUR BABY

A guide to help you
introduce solid foods

best start
meilleur départ
Resource Centre/Centre de ressources

by/par health **nexus** santé



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Feeding Your Baby – A guide to help you introduce solid food

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**BABY'S
FIRST
FOOD**

This guide is about feeding your baby from six months to one year. It has information and answers questions you may have about breastfeeding and starting solid foods.

Breastfeeding is all your baby needs for the first six months. Then continue to breastfeed for two years and beyond while introducing your baby to a variety of solid foods and liquids. Breastfeeding provides your baby with important nutrients and immune protection even when solid foods are started.

Breast milk protects your baby's health in ways that infant formula does not. You can breastfeed as long as you and your baby want to. There is no age when a baby is too old. The longer you breastfeed, the more benefits you and your baby get.

If you include infant formula as you are introducing solids, you will make less breast milk. This can lead to early weaning. If you stop breastfeeding, it can be hard to start breastfeeding again and re-establish a plentiful milk supply for your baby. If you are thinking about using infant formula, get all the facts first.

Babies who are breastfed or receiving breast milk need a daily vitamin D supplement of 400IU (10 micrograms). Continue to give your baby a vitamin D supplement for as long as he is breastfed or receiving breast milk or talk to your health care provider about when you can stop. After two years of age, a vitamin D supplement is no longer recommended. Babies who are not breastfed do not need a supplement because vitamin D has been added to infant formula.



INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS





Remember, healthy babies come in all weights, shapes, and sizes. Try not to compare your baby to other babies. Your baby is growing well if he has a steady weight gain.

When starting to introduce solid foods, it is important to follow your baby's signs of readiness for food.

Growth Spurts

Your baby will have many growth spurts. It is important to know the difference between growth spurts and your baby's readiness for solid foods. During a growth spurt, your baby may have some days when he seems hungrier than usual. During those times, breastfeed your baby more often. The more you breastfeed your baby, the more milk you will produce. Growth spurts are not a sign that your baby needs solid foods. Starting solids does not help your baby sleep through the night.

How do I tell if my baby is ready for solids?

When your baby is showing the following signs of readiness, you can introduce solid foods in addition to continued breastfeeding:

- Holds his head up steadily.
- Can sit up and lean forward.
- Opens his mouth wide when you offer food.
- Can let you know when he is full (e.g., turns head away).
- Can pick up food and try to put it in his mouth.

At first your baby may not accept new foods. If he shows you that he does not want the food by closing his mouth or turning away, try again another day. It can also help to try different textures. Your baby does not need teeth to start eating solid food. His gums are hard enough to chew a variety of textures.

When to introduce solid foods?

Each baby is different. Try not to compare your baby to other babies. Follow your baby's signs of readiness for food. Introduce solid foods no later than just after six months. Your baby needs the extra iron from foods that are rich in iron. For foods that are rich in iron check page 3.

Talk to your health care provider, a registered dietitian, or a public health nurse, if you need more information about when your baby is ready for solid foods.

HOW TO INTRODUCE SOLID FOODS



HOW TO INTRODUCE SOLID FOODS

Having different textures is important to help your baby learn to chew. Babies who stay on pureed texture too long or who start lumpy textures too late may have a hard time feeding later on. You can also start offering soft finger foods with supervision.

Since birth, your baby has been growing on breast milk. At six months of age, breast milk is still the most important food but the time has come to add solid foods, especially iron-rich ones. Solid foods provide a variety of nutrients, flavours, and textures for your baby.

The first foods you offer your baby need to be rich in iron such as:

- **well cooked meat or meat alternatives;**

- beef
- chicken
- turkey
- lamb
- fish
- pork
- whole egg
- tofu
- legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas)

- **iron-fortified infant cereals;**

- rice infant cereal
- oats infant cereal
- barley infant cereal
- wheat infant cereal
- mixed cereals

What kind of textures can I start with?

Offer your baby finger foods and a variety of soft textures such as lumpy, and tender-cooked and finely minced, pureed, mashed or ground.

Offer finger foods when your baby reaches for food or seems to want to feed himself such as finely minced, mashed cooked meat, deboned fish, and poultry; pieces of soft-cooked vegetables and fruits; soft, ripe fruit such as banana; grated cheese; and bread crusts or toasts.

Here are some textures to try:



Finely minced



Ground



Lumpy



Pureed



Mashed



Finger foods

It is also important to introduce a variety of textures from other food groups. For more information on how to introduce other food groups, see pages 7 and 8.



HOW TO INTRODUCE SOLID FOODS

It is safest to sit your baby in a feeding chair or high chair. Do up the safety strap to help keep your baby safe. Always supervise your baby when he is eating.

How should I introduce my baby to a new food?

- Introduce a new food when your baby is happy and hungry.
- Feed your baby when you or other family members are eating.
- Sit your baby up straight. Do up the safety strap to help keep your baby safe.
- Always supervise your baby when he is eating.
- Keep mealtimes pleasant. Your baby will tell you he has had enough to eat when he turns his head away or keeps his mouth shut. Let your baby guide you.
- You may put a small amount of food on the tip of a small spoon. Hold the spoon so your baby can see it. Then put some food on his lips. Put food in his mouth only if he opens it.
- Offer your baby minced, mashed, or grated pieces of food as well as finger foods. Allow him to grab them and put them into his mouth on his own.
- Gradually give your baby more food. Start slowly and work towards offering solid foods three to five times per day, depending on your baby's hunger cues and appetite.
- Help your baby learn to drink from an open cup. You can offer tap water. Babies do not need juice.

What if my baby refuses new foods?

- If your baby does not accept a food the first time you offer it, try again another day. It may take 8-10 tries or more for your baby to accept a new food.
- Mix solid food with breast milk to make it more familiar to your baby.
- Let your baby feed herself with her fingers or fists.
- Serve the food at different temperatures.
- Offer solids when you think your baby is most hungry and not tired.





FOOD ALLERGIES



What should I know about food allergies?

Some foods are more likely to cause a food allergy than others. Many of these foods are also good sources of iron. You can introduce common food allergens as part of your baby's first foods. If there is a family history of allergies, talk to your health care provider.

Here is a complete list of the top common food allergens that are safe to introduce.

COMMON FOOD ALLERGENS SOME EXAMPLES

Eggs	eggs, pasta
Milk*	cheese, yogurt
Mustard	mustard, tomato sauce
Peanuts	peanut butter
Seafood	fish, shellfish
Sesame	tahini (sesame paste)
Soy	tofu (bean curd)
Tree nuts	almond butter
Wheat	cereal, bread

*Wait until 9 to 12 months to introduce homogenized (3.25% M.F.) cow milk (see page 8).

When you introduce a common food allergen for the first time, only offer one per day and wait two days before introducing another food allergen. This will help you to know which food caused a potential allergic reaction. If there is a reaction, it will likely appear within 48 hours. You do not need to wait to introduce all other foods but should always be watching for signs of an allergic reaction. If you, your partner or siblings has a food allergy, talk to your health care provider for advice on how to safely introduce solid food.

Signs of an allergic reaction are rash, vomiting, diarrhea, or breathing problems. Stop feeding a food if you think it causes any of these symptoms. Talk to your health care provider. Call 911 if your baby is having trouble breathing.

Once your baby eats a common food allergen, such as peanut butter, offer it regularly to help maintain tolerance to the food. Some of these foods, such as peanuts and tree nuts, may be a choking hazard. See page 11 for more information about food safety and choking hazards.

Remember, allergens can be found in many different foods. To find out more about foods that contain allergens or if there is a family history of allergies talk to your health care provider.



**SIX TO NINE
MONTHS**

WHAT TO FEED YOUR BABY FROM SIX TO NINE MONTHS

Some finger foods to try:

Meat and alternatives:

- Finely minced, ground, or mashed cooked meat.
- Deboned fish and poultry.
- Pieces of cooked egg.
- Small tender-cooked beans (black beans, navy beans) or larger tender-cooked beans cut in half (kidney beans).

Grains:

- Bread crusts or toasts.
- Cooked pasta.
- Pieces of tortilla.
- Cut up muffin.
- Plain o-shaped cereal.

- Your baby needs iron for good health. It is important to continue to breastfeed according to your baby's cues and to offer iron-rich foods two or more times a day.
- After introducing iron-rich foods, introduce other food groups in any order. The four food groups are: Vegetables & Fruit, Grain Products, Milk & Alternatives, and Meat & Alternatives.
- Feed your baby solids at regular times. Keep mealtimes pleasant. Include your baby at family mealtimes.
- Remember to offer your baby a variety of soft textures. See page 3 for more information about textures.

What kinds of meats and alternatives should I feed my baby?

- Continue to offer well cooked meat or meat alternatives such as beef, chicken, turkey, lamb, fish, pork, egg, tofu, and legumes.
- If cooked meat or meat alternative is dry, add water, expressed breast milk, broth or mix with vegetable puree. Cook and cube, mash, or puree tofu. Cook egg white and yolk well.
- Offer your baby deboned fish such as salmon, halibut, sole, char, haddock, cod, or trout.
- Do not give your baby fish high in mercury more than once a month. These include swordfish, shark, fresh or frozen tuna steak, marlin, orange roughy and escolar. Canned albacore tuna contains less mercury than fresh tuna. Do not give it more than once a week. For more information, see *Mercury in Fish*, applicable for children: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/chem-chim/environ/mercur/cons-adv-etud-eng.php.
- Limit or avoid giving your baby deli meats such as ham, wieners, bologna, salami, or sausages. These are high salt and low in essential nutrients. Also limit or avoid dried fish, since it has been preserved using large amounts of salt.

What types of grains should I feed my baby?

- Continue to offer iron-fortified infant cereals such as rice, oats, wheat, or barley.
- Mix dry cereal with breast milk to add more nutrients. You can make the cereal thicker by adding less breast milk.
- Choose plain infant cereals. Cereals with added fruits have extra sugar.
- If you are trying to avoid milk protein due to an allergy, be aware that infant cereals listed as "Just add water" usually have infant formula or milk solids in them. Read the labels.
- Do not add cereal to a bottle.
- Other grains such as bread crusts or toast, cooked muffin, bran flakes, and unsweetened o-shaped cereal can also be offered to your baby.





ADDING OTHER FOOD GROUPS FROM SIX TO NINE MONTHS

Some finger foods to try:

Vegetables and fruit:

- Soft-cooked vegetables and fruit.
- Soft, ripe fruit.

Milk and alternatives:

- Shredded, grated or cubed cheese.
- Plain yogurt



After your baby has started eating iron-rich foods, your baby needs food from all of the four food groups. Remember to introduce common food allergens one at a time and wait two days before introducing another common food allergen (see page 5). Continue to breastfeed as breastfeeding is an important source of nutrition for older infants and young children as complementary foods are introduced.

If you choose to not introduce or offer your baby certain foods or food groups for personal or cultural reasons please connect with your health care provider or a registered dietitian to help ensure your baby has a well balanced diet.

What kinds of vegetables and fruits should I give my baby?

- You can offer any type of fruit or vegetable that your family eats, including squash, peas, sweet potatoes, green or yellow beans, apples, peaches, pears, apricots, plums, avocados, and bananas.
- Wash and peel fresh vegetables and fruit before using.
- Give your baby mashed or pieces of cooked vegetables and fruit. You can mash or cut lengthwise bananas, papayas, avocados, mangoes, melon, and canned fruits without cooking them.
- If you use store-bought baby fruit avoid “fruit desserts”. They are high in sugar.
- Store-bought combination vegetable and meat dinners have less nutrients than jars of single foods. If you use them add extra meat or alternatives and vegetables to your baby’s meal.

What kinds of milk and alternatives should I give my baby?

- Milk products such as cheese and plain yogurt can be introduced at 6 months of age.
- Avoid skim, 1% and 2% milk products and products that are sweetened with honey or artificial sweeteners.
- Do not give your baby homogenized (3.25% M.F.) cow’s milk until he is 9 to 12 months old, and only if he is also eating a variety of iron-rich foods. Introduction of cow milk should be delayed until 9 to 12 months of age since it does not have enough nutrition to be their main milk source.
- Do not give soy, almond, rice, coconut or other plant-based beverages. They do not have enough nutrients that your baby needs for proper growth and development.

What about water and other drinks?

- Your baby gets enough to drink from breast milk. If you want to offer water to your baby, give tap or bottled water in an open cup. She will need help at first but this will help her learn to drink from an open cup. Do not give distilled, carbonated, or mineral water.
- Your baby does not need juice. Offer whole fruit more often than juice. If you decide to offer juice, limit to ½ cup (125 ml) of 100% pure juice per day. You do not need to add water to juice.
 - Do not give your baby herbal teas, sports drinks or drinks with caffeine. These may include coffee, tea, hot chocolate, soft drinks or energy drinks.

NINE MONTHS TO ONE YEAR

**As your baby gets older
continue breastfeeding
and increase the variety
of foods and textures
that you offer.**



FOOD GROUP TIPS

Let your baby feed himself with his hands or a baby spoon. Make sure his hands are clean before eating.

- **Expect a mess! Making a mess is just part of learning how to eat.**
- **Depending on your child's appetite, provide up to 3 larger feedings (meals) and 1-2 smaller feedings (snacks) per day.**

Vegetables and Fruit	<p>Offer soft, cooked vegetables cut in strips or bite-sized pieces.</p> <p>Give pieces of soft, ripe fruit like bananas, peaches, kiwi, and cantaloupe.</p>
Grain Products	<p>Iron-fortified infant cereal is a good source of iron. For babies that are refusing infant cereal, try replacing it with an iron-fortified, plain o-shaped cereal.</p> <p>Offer finger foods such as pieces of bagel, dry toast strips, rice, roti, noodles, cooked pasta, flat bread, and unsalted crackers.</p>
Milk and Alternatives	<p>Continue to breastfeed until your baby is two years or older. You can breastfeed as long as you and your baby want to. Breast milk can be the main milk source as it contains all the needed nutrients. Other fluid milk is not needed.</p> <p>In addition to breast milk, when your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods every day, you can offer your baby homogenized (3.25% M.F.) cow milk. He should be between nine months and one year old. Give milk in an open cup.</p> <p>Do not give skim, 1%, 2% milk, or low-fat milk products. Babies need the fat to grow and help their brain develop.</p> <p>Do not give soy, almond, rice, coconut or other plant-based beverages as a main milk source. They do not have enough nutrients that your baby needs for proper growth and development.</p> <p>Never give unpasteurized milk.</p> <p>Continue to offer plain yogurt, cottage cheese and small cubes of cheese or shredded cheese. Choose full-fat varieties instead of 2% or lower.</p>
Meat and Alternatives	<p>Give bite-size pieces of tender meat, cooked beans, low mercury fish, and tofu.</p> <p>Try meat alternatives like beans and tofu. Try these alternatives even if your baby does not refuse meat. You can also try mixing meats or meat alternatives with sweet potatoes or squash to enhance flavour and texture.</p> <p>Give cooked whole eggs (e.g. hard boiled, chopped, scrambled).</p> <p>Thinly spread peanut butter or other nut butters on toast or crackers.</p>
<p>By one year old, your baby should be eating a variety of foods from each food group and drinking liquids from an open cup. Babies can go directly from breastfeeding to drinking fluid milk from an open cup.</p>	





**HELP YOUR
BABY BE
A HEALTHY
EATER**

If you have questions or concerns about your baby's eating, talk to your health care provider or registered dietitian.

You and your baby's responsibilities:

When introducing solid foods you are responsible for:

- What your baby is given to eat.
- When foods are offered.
- Where to feed your baby.

Trust that your baby can decide:

- How much to eat.
- Whether or not to eat.
- How to eat it (spoon or fingers).

To help your baby be a healthy eater, follow these tips:

- Bring your baby to the table to join in at family mealtimes. Babies learn by watching others.
- Keep mealtimes pleasant. Family mealtimes should be relaxed and happy occasions.
- Be role models and introduce lifelong healthy eating habits.
- Always stay with your baby when she eats.
- Offer your baby foods she can feed herself. Messy mealtimes are part of the learning process.
- Pay attention to your baby's hunger and fullness cues. It is normal for babies to eat different amounts of food each day.
- Let your baby decide how much to eat. It is alright if your baby refuses a meal or two.
- Avoid forcing your baby to eat more than she wants or forcing food into her mouth.
- Give her the amount of food she wants to eat when she seems hungry.
- Be patient with new foods. You may need to try new foods many times on different days.
- Remove distractions like toys and screens.
- Choose rewards and punishments not related to food. This will help avoid associating foods with certain behaviours.



HOMEMADE BABY FOOD





Making food for your baby is a great way to let your baby enjoy the healthy foods that you enjoy. You do not need special equipment. Making food for your baby also:

- Saves you money.
- Lets your baby try a greater variety of foods and food from your culture.
- Helps your baby get used to different textures and tastes.
- Lets your baby eat the same foods as your family.

How do I make food for my baby?

To make food for your baby you can use a knife, food blender, baby food mill (grinder), wire sieve and spoon, potato masher, or fork.

Wash your hands before you prepare food. Use clean utensils and cookware. A variety of foods help to introduce your baby to many flavours. You don't need to add sugar, salt, margarine, or butter. You can add spices if you wish.

The following table outlines how to prepare different types of foods:

FOODS	HOW TO PREPARE
Vegetables and fruit	<p>Wash, peel, pit, and/or seed and slice fresh vegetables or fruit or use frozen.</p> <p>Place vegetables or fruit in a small amount of boiling water. Cook until tender.</p> <p>Drain and keep the cooking water.</p> <p>Slice lengthwise, change texture or use a small amount of cooking water as needed.</p> <p>You can slice lengthwise, blend, grate, finely mince or mash ripe, soft fruits (bananas, mangoes, avocados) and canned fruit (packed in water) without cooking them.</p>
Meat and fish	<p>Place a piece of meat or fish in a saucepan with a small amount of water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer. Continue to cook until meat separates easily from the bones or the fish flakes easily with a fork. You can also roast, bake, or braise meats and fish.</p> <p>Remove the bones and skin and trim off the fat. Cut meat or flake fish into small pieces.</p> <p>Blend with cooking water or stock.</p>
Meat alternatives	<p>Cook legumes, such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas, according to package directions. Rinse canned beans well. Cook eggs. Use plain tofu.</p> <p>Blend with a little water or mash with a fork.</p>

For more information on making baby food, call your local public health unit or visit the EatRight Ontario website (www.eatrightontario.ca).

Remember to offer your baby a variety of soft textures such as mashed, minced, ground, pureed, lumpy, grated, and tender-cooked. See page 3 for more information about textures.



**FOOD
SAFETY**

Do not feed your baby directly from the jar or container of baby food unless you're giving your baby the whole amount.



How do I keep baby's food safe?

- Serve freshly made baby food or an opened jar of store-bought baby food right away. You can also store it in a covered container in the fridge for two days.
- You can store baby food in a fridge freezer for two months or a deep freezer for six months.
- Make sure the safety seal on the jar of store-bought baby food is not broken. Listen for a popping sound when you open a jar of baby food.
- Check the “best before” date on store-bought baby food.
- Put the food for your baby into a bowl. Throw out any food that has come in contact with your baby's saliva.
- Defrost raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood in the:
 - Fridge
 - Microwave
 - Container or sealed bag submerged in cold water
- When using the microwave, cook the food right after it thaws.
- Refreezing thawed food is not recommended.
- Perishable food should not be left out for more than:
 - 1 hour during summer outdoor activities.
 - 2 hours at room temperature.

How do I keep my baby safe?

- Babies can choke easily. Always stay with your baby while she is eating.
- Respect baby's feeding cues (see page 9).
- Offer texture and finger foods according to your baby's cues and development. Know the foods that can be choking hazards, such as nuts, popcorn, whole grapes and hard vegetables.
- Offer your baby healthy fish, meats and alternatives choices. See page 6.
- Offer your baby low mercury fish such as salmon, char, or trout. Fresh or frozen tuna, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and escolar are often high in mercury. Do not give your baby these fish more than once per month. Do not give your baby canned albacore tuna more than once per week.
- To prevent salmonella poisoning, do not give your baby foods that contain raw eggs (e.g. homemade mayonnaise, sauces and dressing, homemade ice cream), raw or undercooked meat, and unpasteurized milk or milk products.
- To prevent infant botulism (food poisoning), do not give your baby honey or any food made with honey for the first year.



**SAMPLE
MENUS FOR
BABY**

SAMPLE MENUS FOR BABY

- When solid food is introduced, breastfeeding continues on cue.
- Breast milk can be offered before or after solid foods.
- These menus are only a guide. You can decide according to your convenience and your child's cues.
- Every baby is different. Trust that your baby knows how much to eat.

TIME OF DAY	6 MONTHS	6-9 MONTHS	9-12 MONTHS
Early morning	Breastfeeding/breast milk	Breastfeeding/breast milk	Breastfeeding/breast milk
Morning	Breastfeeding/breast milk Iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or water	Breastfeeding/breast milk Iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or water Mashed fruit	Breastfeeding/breast milk Iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or water Soft fruit
Snack	Breastfeeding/breast milk	Breastfeeding/breast milk Small pieces of toast, bread, crackers, roti, or pita	Breastfeeding/breast milk or homogenized milk from an open cup Unsweetened dry cereal
Noon	Breastfeeding/breast milk	Breastfeeding/breast milk Mashed vegetables Plain mashed or finely chopped meat or meat alternatives* Grated cheese	Breastfeeding/breast milk or homogenized milk from an open cup Chopped meat or meat alternatives* Cooked pasta or cooked rice Chopped vegetables Soft fruit
Snack	Breastfeeding/breast milk	Breastfeeding/breast milk	Whole grain and fruit muffin Cubes of cheese
Evening	Breastfeeding/breast milk Plain pureed or mashed meat or meat alternatives. Iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or water	Breastfeeding/breast milk Plain mashed or finely chopped meat or meat alternatives* Mashed vegetables or fruit Iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or water	Breastfeeding/breast milk or homogenized milk from an open cup Chopped meat or meat alternatives* Cooked pasta or cooked rice Chopped vegetables Soft fruit and/or plain yogurt
Snack	Breastfeeding/breast milk	Breastfeeding/breast milk Small pieces of whole wheat toast, bagel, bun, pita, roti, or naan bread	Breastfeeding/breast milk or homogenized milk from an open cup Small pieces of whole wheat toast, bagel, bun, pita, roti, naan bread, or dry unsweetened cereal.

* Meat alternatives include fish, cooked legumes, beans and lentils, tofu and eggs.

For more sample menus see:

- EatRight Ontario www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Breastfeeding-Infant-feeding/Sample-meal-plans-for-feeding-your-baby.aspx
- Healthy Canadians www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/infant-care-soins-bebe/nutrition-alimentation-eng.php



Do you have questions?

Contact EatRight Ontario, a registered dietitian or a public health nurse.

RESOURCES

Your local public health department

Registered dietitians or public health nurses provide information and support:
1-800-267-8097 or www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx

Dietitians of Canada

Information on food and nutrition: www.dietitians.ca

EatRight Ontario

Speak with a registered dietitian for free:
1-877-510-510-2 or www.eatrightontario.ca

Your local Child and Family Programs

Get information about programs and services that are available for young children and their families and talk to early years professionals, as well as other parents and caregivers in the community:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/FamilyPrograms.html

Feeding your baby in the first year, Canadian Paediatric Society:

www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/feeding_your_baby_in_the_first_year

Infant Nutrition – Plan wisely for your baby:

www.healthy Canadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/infant-care-soins-bebe/nutrition-alimentation-eng.php

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