

Baby's First Foods

From birth to 6 months of age

Breast milk is the *best* food for your baby. Offer iron-fortified formula to babies who are not breastfed. Babies do not need solid foods until they are 6 months old.

Breastfed babies need 400 IU of vitamin D each day from a vitamin supplement. Formula fed babies may need a vitamin D supplement depending on how much formula they drink. Babies who drink both breast milk and formula need a vitamin D supplement.

Ask your doctor or a registered dietitian about whether your formula fed baby needs a vitamin D supplement.

Why start foods at 6 months of age?

- At 6 months of age your baby needs more nutrients, especially iron.
- Your baby needs to try different tastes and textures.
- Most babies are ready for solid foods. Signs of readiness include:
 - baby sits and holds her head up, and
 - watches and opens her mouth for the spoon, and
 - does not push food out with her tongue.
- Before 6 months high-nitrate vegetables (home-prepared carrots, spinach, turnips and beets) should not be offered.

How much should I offer my baby?

- **Let your baby decide how much to eat.** When feeding your baby, look for signs of hunger and fullness.
- Babies will shut their mouth, turn their head, or push food away when they have had enough to eat. Do not force your baby to eat more when he has had enough.
- Babies who are still hungry will continue to open their mouths for food and may be upset when the food is taken away.

Use the amounts of food listed here as a general guideline only.

How do I start?

- Offer one new food at a time.
- Wait a few days before adding another new food.
- Do not put cereal or other solids in a bottle.

From 6 to 9 months of age

- Continue to breastfeed or offer iron-fortified infant formula whenever your baby is hungry – about 720-960 mL (24-32 oz) each day. As your baby eats more solids, he will gradually drink less breast milk or formula.
- Sips of water may be offered in a cup, but don't let your baby fill up on water.
- Your baby does not need juice. If offering juice, limit to 60-125 mL (1/4-1/2 cup) per day, served in a cup. Offer 100% juice only.

When starting solids, choose a time when baby is content, interested and alert. Begin by offering solids 2 to 3 times per day and increase to 3 to 4 times per day. Sit down and eat with your baby.

- Start with small amounts of high iron foods like single-grain iron-fortified infant cereal or well-cooked finely minced meat, poultry or fish. Mix with breast milk, formula, or water.
- Gradually increase cereal to about 60-125 mL (4-8 Tbsp) each day. If your baby does not eat meat, aim for at least 125 mL (8 Tbsp) of cereal, on average, each day by 9 months of age.
- Offer cooked, well-mashed vegetables like yams, sweet potatoes, potatoes, squash, carrots, and mashed fruit like pears, peaches, and bananas. Start with small amounts and gradually increase to about 60-125 mL (4-8 Tbsp) per day.
- Continue to offer meat, poultry and fish, while adding other high iron foods like cooked egg yolk, lentils, beans, and tofu - about 100 mL (6 Tbsp) total per day.
- Around 9 months of age, try cottage cheese, plain yogurt, and small pieces of hard cheese like cheddar or gouda, and pasteurized soft cheese.

Pureed foods are not needed. Baby can enjoy mashed foods and finger foods before teeth appear.

- Offer finger foods such as:
 - pieces of cooked vegetables or soft fruit without the peel, such as potato, yam, avocado, apricot, pear, banana, peach, plum
 - pieces of toast, roti or tortilla
 - cooked rice or pasta

- “oat rings” cereal

From 9 to 12 months of age

- Breast milk or iron-fortified formula – about 720-840 mL (24-28 oz) per day.
- Offer water in a cup.
- Your baby does not need juice. If offering juice, limit to 60-125 mL (1/4-1/2 cup) per day, served in a cup. Offer 100% juice only.
- Do not let your baby sip on juice (or diluted juice) between meals or snacks as this can cause tooth decay.

Offer foods 3 to 4 times per day. Offer solid foods before breast or formula feeding.

- Iron-fortified infant cereal, about 125 mL (1/2 cup) or more per day.
- Meat, fish, poultry, cooked egg yolk, lentils, beans, and tofu – about 100-125 mL (6-8 Tbsp) total per day.
- Soft vegetables and fruit – about 125-250 mL (1/2-1 cup) per day.
- Let baby try self-feeding with fingers or a spoon.
- By 1 year of age your baby can eat the same meals as the rest of the family (soft and diced). See information under safety tips.

Health professionals recommend that egg white not be given to babies until 1 year of age to lower the chance of an allergic reaction.

What about cow’s milk?

Breastfeeding is recommended until your baby is 2 years-old and beyond. When your baby is 9-12 months old and taking a variety of iron rich solid foods, it is okay to start substituting whole milk for breast milk or formula.

Babies and toddlers need fat for brain development, so choose whole milk until 2 years of age. Lower-fat milk (1% and 2%) can be offered after 2 years of age. Other drinks such as soy or rice beverages may be offered after 2 years of age, but check the label to make sure they are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

If you choose whole goat milk, make sure it is pasteurized. Most goat milk does not contain vitamin D, in which case your baby would need a vitamin D supplement.

Tips for enjoyable mealtimes

Help your baby develop healthy food habits and a relaxed feeling about eating.

- Offer food at the same times each day.

- Sit down and eat with your child. Babies and children enjoy company while eating.
- *You* decide what foods to offer.
- Let your *baby* decide how much and whether to eat.
- Expect a mess. It is part of learning to eat!
- If you have questions or concerns about feeding your baby solids, talk to a registered dietitian.

Safety tips

- ***Always stay with your baby while he or she is eating or drinking.***
- Do not give foods that can cause choking such as popcorn, peanuts, nuts, hard candies, hard raw vegetables like carrots, whole marshmallows, jellybeans, globs of peanut butter, ice cubes, and chips.
- Hot dogs and grapes should be sliced lengthwise first, and then into small pieces.
- Honey can cause botulism poisoning in babies and is not recommended for babies under 1 year of age.
- Milk, juice, and soft cheeses, such as brie, camembert and feta should be pasteurized.

Allergy Alert:

Are you concerned about food allergies? Talk to your baby’s doctor, a registered dietitian or a public health nurse.

For more information, contact your community nutritionist, or Dial-A-Dietitian at 604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-3438 to speak to a registered dietitian.



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