

Finger Foods for Babies 6 -12 months

Why offer your 6-12 month old finger foods?

Finger foods are small pieces of food that your baby can pick up and eat easily. Introducing finger foods early, soon after starting solids, helps your baby get used to different food textures, improves coordination and encourages self-feeding. These are important feeding skills.

Your baby is ready for finger foods when she grabs food and starts putting things in her mouth. If your baby is not taking foods with a lumpy texture and finger foods by 9 months, talk to your health care provider.



Steps you can take

- Sit your baby in a high chair to eat. Whenever possible, sit down and eat at the same time. Never leave your baby alone while eating.
- Babies can enjoy soft finger foods before they have teeth. They can mash foods into smaller pieces using their gums.
- Mealtimes may be messy and slow at first. This is part of learning how to eat. As babies get older, they get better at putting food into their mouths. To reduce waste, start by giving your baby a small amount of food and offer more based on hunger cues.
- Fruits should be peeled and cut into small pieces with the pits removed. Cook vegetables until they are soft, or grate hard raw vegetables.
- Hard and sticky foods can cause choking and should be avoided. Do not give these foods to your child: whole nuts or seeds, globs of nut or seed butters, raisins, popcorn, ice cubes, chips, gum, marshmallows, hard candies or jellybeans. Cut round foods like carrots, grapes and hot dogs in 4 pieces lengthwise and then into small pieces.
- Don't use hard foods (like raw vegetable sticks) for teething. Your baby can break off a piece and choke.
- Babies can eat many of the same foods as the rest of the family by the time they are 12 months old. Continue to cut food into small pieces and make sure it is moist. Prepare foods with little or no added sugar or salt.
- Here are some safe finger food ideas from Canada's Food Guide:

Grains

Cooked pasta - macaroni, rotini, penne; pieces of rice cakes; cereal like bran flakes or oat rings; Melba toast; pieces of roti or tortilla; cut up muffin; strips of toast with the crust removed (dry or with butter or margarine)

Vegetables and Fruits

Pieces of ripe fruit without peel or skin: Avocado, banana, peach, pear, kiwi, melon, or quartered grapes; soft cooked vegetables: broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, yam, or squash

Milk & Alternatives (offer once baby is taking a variety of iron-rich foods)

Cheese slices; grated or small cubes of pasteurized cheese

Meat & Alternatives (well cooked)

Tofu; ground meat or poultry; small (pea sized) pieces of tender meat or poultry; fish (de-boned and flaked); quartered meatball; pieces of egg; small beans (black beans, navy beans) or larger beans cut in half (kidney beans)



Additional Resources

For information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, call **8-1-1** and ask to speak to a HealthLink BC dietitian.

For additional information, see the following:

- HealthLink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca – Get medically approved non-emergency health information.

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.



Notes

Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca or call **8-1-1** (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.