



## Baby's First Foods

### From birth to 6 months of age

Breast milk is the best choice for your baby. You should offer iron-fortified infant formula to babies who are not breastfed. Babies do not need solid foods until they are 6 months of age.

Babies who breastfeed need 400 IU of vitamin D each day from a vitamin supplement. Babies who have formula may also need a vitamin D supplement depending on how much formula they drink.

### Why start solid foods at 6 months of age?

At 6 months of age, your baby needs more nutrients, especially iron. She is also ready to try different tastes and foods with texture. Signs of readiness include the following:

- Your baby sits and holds her head up;
- She watches and opens her mouth for the spoon; and
- She does not push food out of her mouth with her tongue.

### How much should I offer my baby?

Let your baby decide how much to eat. Use the amounts of food listed here as a general guideline only.

When feeding your baby, look for signs or cues of hunger and fullness. Do not force your baby to eat more when she has had enough.

- Babies will shut their mouths, turn their heads or push food away when they have had enough to eat.
- Babies who are still hungry will continue to open their mouths for food, and they may be upset if the food is taken away.

### How do I start?

- Choose a time when your baby is content, interested and alert. Sit down and eat with your baby.
- When starting, offer solid foods after breastfeeding or formula feeding. Pureed foods are not needed.

Your baby can enjoy mashed foods and finger foods before teeth appear.

- Begin by offering solid foods 2 to 3 times per day and increase to 3 to 4 times per day. As your baby eats more solid foods, she will gradually drink less breast milk or formula.
- Offer one new food at a time.
- Wait a few days before adding another new food.
- You can keep offering foods your baby tolerates while you add new foods.
- Do not put cereal or other solids in a bottle.

### From 6 to 8 months of age

- Continue to breastfeed or offer iron-fortified infant formula according to your baby's hunger and fullness signs or cues.
- Sips of water may be offered in a cup, but do not 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.
- Start with high iron foods like well-cooked, finely minced meat, poultry or fish, single-grain iron-fortified infant cereal, mashed cooked egg, lentils, beans or tofu. Mix with breast milk, formula or water. Offer high iron foods at least twice a day.
- Gradually increase cereal to about 60-125 mL (4-8 Tbsp) each day.
- Gradually increase meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, egg, lentils, beans and tofu to about 100-125 mL (6-8 Tbsp) total per day.
- Offer cooked well-mashed vegetables and mashed fruit. Start with small amounts and gradually increase to about 60-125 mL (4-8 Tbsp) per day.
- Start to offer finger foods such as small pieces of cooked vegetables and soft skinless fruits, pieces of toast or roti, cooked pasta, and "oat rings" cereal.

### From 9 to 12 months of age

- Offer breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula according to your baby's hunger and fullness signs or cues. As your baby eats more solid foods, she will gradually drink less breast milk or formula.

- 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 milk, juice or diluted juice between meals or snacks as this can cause tooth decay.
- Offer solids 3 to 4 times per day. Offer solids before breast or formula feeding.
- Your baby can eat the same meals – soft and diced foods – as the rest of the family. See information under safety tips.
- Offer iron-fortified cereal, about 125 mL (1/2 cup) or more per day.
- Serve well-cooked meat, fish, shellfish, poultry, egg, lentils, beans, and tofu – about 100-125 mL (6-8 Tbsp) total per day.
- Offer soft vegetables and fruit – about 125-250 mL (1/2-1 cup) per day.
- After 9 months of age, offer unsalted cottage cheese, plain yogurt, small pieces of hard cheese like cheddar or gouda, and pasteurized soft cheese.
- Let baby try self-feeding with fingers or a spoon.

### What about cow's milk?

Breastfeeding is recommended until your baby is 2 years of age and older. It is okay to offer small amounts of whole milk in a cup when your baby is 9-12 months of age and eats a variety of iron-rich solid foods.

Babies and toddlers need fat for brain development, so choose whole milk (3.25% MF) until 2 years of age. Lower-fat milk (1% and 2% MF) 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 healthy and enjoyable meals

- Offer food at the same times each day.
- Sit down and eat with your child. Babies and children enjoy company while eating. You are their best role model.
- You decide which foods to offer.
- Let your baby decide how much and whether to eat.
- Expect a mess. It is part of learning to eat.

### 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 chips, popcorn, peanuts, nuts, sunflower/pumpkin seeds, raisins, hard candies, hard raw vegetables such as carrots, marshmallows, jellybeans, globs of peanut butter, or ice cubes.
- Grate raw vegetables, and slice and chop grapes into small pieces. Hot dogs and/or wieners are not a healthy choice, but if you offer these, cut them into small pieces.
- Honey can cause botulism poisoning in babies, and it is not recommended for babies under 1 year of age.
- High nitrate vegetables, such as home-prepared carrots, spinach, turnips and beets, should not be offered before 6 months of age.
- Milk, juice and soft cheeses, such as brie, camembert and feta, should be pasteurized.
- When you offer your baby family meals, make sure these are not high in sodium.
- Fish is a healthy choice, but be sure to take out the bones. Choose fish low in mercury. See [HealthLink BC File #68m Healthy Eating: Choose Fish Low in Mercury](#).

### Allergy Alert:

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

### For more information

See HealthLink BC File [#70 Breastfeeding](#)

See HealthLink BC File [#69a Formula Feeding Your Baby: Getting Started](#)

**For more nutrition information, contact your community nutritionist, or call 8-1-1 to speak to a registered dietitian.**

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