



## Baby's first foods

From birth to 6 months, human milk (breast milk) and a daily 400 IU vitamin D supplement can provide all of a baby's nutrient needs. Some babies are fed infant formula, which already has added vitamin D. Babies who drink only formula do not need a vitamin D supplement.

### When do I offer solid foods to my baby?

Start offering solid foods to your baby at around 6 months. All babies need more nutrients at this time, especially iron. Your baby may be ready for solid foods if they can:

- Hold their head up
- Sit up and lean forward
- Open their mouth to accept food
- Pick up and try to bring food to their mouth, and
- Let you know when they're full. For example, by turning their head away

Offer food when your baby is calm, interested and alert. Try and have your baby's meals at the same time as family meals so that you can eat together as often as possible. This can help your baby learn food skills, develop healthy eating patterns and be more likely to try and enjoy a variety of foods.

### How much food does my baby need?

While you decide what foods to offer, let your baby decide how much to eat. Offer food when your baby shows signs of hunger and stop when they show signs of fullness.

Your baby may be hungry if they:

- Reach for or point to food
- Open their mouth, lean forward or get excited for food
- Get upset if food is taken away

Your baby may be full if they:

- Close their mouth when food is offered
- Push food away
- Refuse to eat or turn their head away

Start by giving your baby small amounts of solid food, such as one to 2 teaspoons at a time. Gradually increase the amount based on their appetite.

The number of times you offer solid foods to your baby each day depends on their age and appetite. Work towards the following:

- By 8 months: 2 to 3 meals and one to 2 snacks
- By 12 months: 3 meals and 2 to 3 snacks

### What types of food do I offer my baby?

Your baby can eat many of the same foods enjoyed by the family. Offer family foods made with little or no added salt or sugar.

Start with iron-rich foods and offer them at least 2 times each day. Examples include:

- Well-cooked, finely minced or shredded meat, poultry and boneless fish, such as beef, pork, chicken, turkey, cod and salmon
- Mashed cooked egg, lentils, beans and tofu
- Iron-fortified infant cereal
- Smooth peanut, tree nut and seed butters blended with an equal amount of warm water and stirred into iron-fortified infant cereal

Along with iron-rich foods, offer other nutritious foods such as vegetables, fruits and whole grains.

### What types of textures do I offer my baby?

Offer a variety of soft textures such as lumpy, finely minced, mashed, ground and pureed. Offer foods with lumpy textures by no later than 9 months.

Your baby can eat soft foods and finger foods before they have teeth. Finger foods help improve your baby's coordination and encourage self-feeding. Safe finger foods include:

- Cooked and finely minced, ground or mashed meat, boneless fish, poultry, eggs, tofu and beans
- Small pieces of cooked vegetables and fruit, and soft ripe fruits without the skin

- Grated hard cheese
- Strips of toast with butter, margarine, or thinly spread smooth nut and seed butters

Offer new textures as your baby gets older. Around 8 to 12 months of age, your baby will be able to bite and chew chopped foods and a greater variety of finger foods, such as:

- Small pieces of soft meat, fish, poultry, egg, cooked tofu and beans
- Small pieces of bannock, roti, tortilla, pasta, rice
- Grated raw vegetables

Remember that learning to eat can be messy! Give your baby time to explore and learn about food.

### When can I introduce common food allergens?

To reduce the risk of a food allergy developing, introduce common food allergens when your baby starts solid foods, at about 6 months of age. This includes safely prepared peanut, tree nut, sesame seed, egg, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy and milk products. Many common food allergens are iron-rich and can be part of your baby's first foods.

- You can start with the common food allergens your family eats
- Offer food allergens one at a time. This makes it easier to link a specific food to a reaction
- Once your baby has eaten a common allergen without having an allergic reaction, continue to offer it regularly. This may help prevent a food allergy from developing

### What can I offer my baby to drink?

- Continue to offer human milk until 2 years of age or older. Solid foods can be offered before or after human milk. Do what works best for you and your baby. As your baby eats more food, they'll start to drink less human milk
- If you feed your baby infant formula, continue to offer until 9 to 12 months of age
- You can give pasteurized homogenized (3.25% M.F.) cow milk in an open cup when your baby is 9 to 12 months of age and eating a variety of iron-rich foods

- Sips of water can be offered in an open cup after 6 months of age

### Drinks to avoid offering your baby

- Sugary drinks, including 100% fruit juice
- Skim, 1% and 2% milk, and fortified soy beverage are not recommended before 2 years of age. They do not provide enough fat or energy for growing babies
- Coconut, oat, rice, and nut or seed beverages should not be offered before 2 years of age. They do not have enough fat, energy, or protein for growing babies

### How do I keep my baby safe while eating?

- Prepare foods in ways that reduce your baby's risk of choking. For example, cut round foods like grapes, cherry tomatoes and large berries into smaller pieces
- Only give your baby pasteurized milk products. You can find this information on the label
- Never offer honey if your baby is less than one year old. This includes both pasteurized and unpasteurized honey and foods that contain honey, even if cooked. Honey can give your baby a food-borne illness called botulism
- Choose fish that are lower in mercury, such as salmon, trout, mackerel, sole, cod, pollock, halibut, herring, sardines and canned light tuna

### For more information

If you have questions about feeding your baby, contact your health care provider or call **8-1-1** to speak with a registered dietitian.

- [HealthLinkBC File #110b Preventing choking in babies and young children](#)
- [HealthLink BC: Reducing Risk of Food Allergy in Your Baby](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #69i Iron-rich foods for babies and toddlers](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #69h Feeding your baby: Sample meals for babies 6 to 12 months old](#)