



FEEDING YOUR BABY

**From Six Months
To One Year**

Your guide to help you
introduce food to your baby

The Best Start Resource Centre is a program of Health Nexus (www.healthnexus.ca).

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For the first six months of life breast milk is the only food that your baby needs to grow and be healthy. Breastfeeding is the normal way to feed babies.

If you give your baby any other food, including infant formula, you will make less breast milk. If you stop breastfeeding, it can be hard to start breastfeeding again. Your baby will not get all of the benefits of breastfeeding.

- Breastfeeding is healthy, natural, convenient, and free. It is a good way to bond with your baby.
- Breast milk contains antibodies that lower the chance of your baby getting infections.
- Mothers who breastfeed have less risk of breast cancer, and ovarian cancer.

Breastfed babies need 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D each day. Continue until your baby is one year old and eating foods that have vitamin D. In Canada, the sun is not strong enough throughout the year for mothers and babies to make the vitamin D they need through their skin. Also, babies who are less than one year old need to stay out of direct sunlight.

Continue to breastfeed until your baby is two years old or more. The longer you breastfeed, the more benefits you and your baby get. If you are thinking about using infant formula, get all the facts first. Breast milk protects your baby's health in ways that infant formula does not.



WHEN TO START SOLID FOODS: SIX MONTHS

When to start solid foods: Six months

When your baby is six months old he is ready for solid foods. Your baby does not need teeth to start eating solid food.

Starting solid foods too early or too late can cause problems.

IF YOU:

YOUR BABY MAY:

Start your baby on solid foods too early	Breastfeed less often causing you to make less breast milk
	Stop breastfeeding too early
	Not get all the benefits of breast milk such as protection from illness
	Have lower iron levels
	Have a diet low in protein, fat, and other important nutrients
Start your baby on solid foods too late	Be slow to accept solid foods Have a hard time chewing food
	Not get all the vitamins and minerals he needs, such as iron and vitamin A

Growth Spurts

Growth spurts are common at about:

- three weeks;
- six weeks;
- three months;
- 6 months.

Your baby may want extra breast milk at these times.

- This is not a sign that your baby needs solid foods.
- Starting solids does not help your baby sleep through the night.
- Wait until your baby is 6 months old to start solid food.

Breastfeed more often when your baby seems hungry during a growth spurt.



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.

STARTING SOLID FOODS AT SIX MONTHS

At six months it is important to offer iron-rich foods such as:

- iron-fortified infant cereals;
- beef;
- chicken;
- turkey;
- lamb;
- fish;
- pork;
- eggs;
- tofu; and
- well-cooked legumes such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas.

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

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

Your baby is ready to start eating solids when she:

- is six months old;
- holds her head up;
- sits up in a high chair;
- opens her mouth wide when you offer food on a spoon;
- turns her face away if she doesn't want the food;
- closes her lips over the spoon; and
- keeps food in her mouth and swallows it instead of pushing it out.

Make sure your baby shows all of these signs of readiness before you start solid foods.

- At first your baby may not accept new foods. If she shows you that she does not like the food by closing her mouth or turning her head away, stop feeding her that food. Try it again another day. Keep feeding time pleasant. If your baby feels pressured to eat, she may not want to try other new foods.
- Each baby is different. Try not to compare your baby to other babies. Follow your baby's signs of readiness for food. Talk to your health care provider to help you decide if your baby is ready.



It is safest to sit your baby in a high chair. Do up the seat belt to help keep your baby safe. Never leave your baby alone.

- Give solid food after your baby has had breast milk. Continue to breastfeed throughout the day as your baby needs it.
- Start a new food when your baby is happy and hungry. Start new foods in the morning or at lunchtime. Include him at family mealtimes.
- Sit your baby up straight. It is safest to sit your baby in a high chair. Do up the seat belt to help keep your baby safe. Never leave your baby alone.
- Keep mealtimes pleasant. Never force your baby to eat.

How should I start my baby on a new food?

- 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.
- If your baby does not swallow the food, he may not be ready for solid food yet. Wait a few days and try again.
- If your baby does not like a new food at first, try it again another day. He may need to try a new food many times before he likes it.
- Gradually give your baby more food. Let your baby guide you. Your baby will tell you he has had enough to eat when he turns his head away or keeps his mouth shut.

How do I protect my baby from allergies?

- Start with single foods, not mixed. If your baby shows signs of allergy, this makes it easier to know which food is causing the problem.
- Give the same food for three to five days before you try a new food. Signs of food allergy may take up to five days to appear.
- Signs of allergy are rash, vomiting, diarrhea, or breathing problems. Stop feeding the food if you think it causes any of these symptoms. Talk to your doctor. Call 911 if your baby is having trouble breathing.



WHAT TO FEED YOUR BABY FROM SIX TO NINE MONTHS

Your baby needs iron for good health. Continue to:

- breastfeed; and
- provide the extra iron that your baby needs by offering her the iron-rich foods listed in the section called Starting solid foods at six months on page 3.

Feed your baby at regular times. Include her at family mealtimes. Talk to her gently.

Start your baby on pureed foods. Next, move to lumpy, mashed foods. As your baby becomes better at eating, give her finely chopped foods. Changing texture is important to help your baby learn to chew. Babies who stay on pureed foods too long may be less willing to eat textured foods. Increase texture and work up to offering small soft pieces to baby by 9 months of age.

What types of infant cereal should I feed my baby?

- Start with an iron-fortified, single grain infant cereal, such as rice. Gradually try other single grain cereals, such as oats, barley, and wheat.
- Use mixed grain cereals only after your baby has tried each of the single grain cereals.
- Mix the dry cereal with breast milk. At first make the cereal thin. As your baby becomes better at eating, add less breast milk to make the cereal thicker.
- Choose plain infant cereals. Cereals with added fruits have extra sugar.
- Choose cereals without infant formula added. Read the labels.
- Do not give adult cereals.
- Always feed cereal from a spoon. Never add cereal to a bottle.

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

- Keep meats and alternatives moist so they are easy to swallow. Add extra water or broth to meats and cooked beans. Use silken (soft) tofu. Cook egg white and yolk well.
- Do not give your baby deli meats such as ham, wieners, bologna, salami, or sausages. These are high in fat and salt.
- Give your baby fish such as white fish, salmon and light canned tuna. Swordfish, shark, fresh or frozen tuna steak, canned albacore tuna, marlin, orange roughy and escolar are often high in mercury. Do not give your baby these fish more than once a month.

After your baby has started eating iron-rich foods, she needs other foods like vegetables and fruit. See the section called Adding other new foods from six to nine months on page 6.



ADDING OTHER NEW FOODS FROM SIX TO NINE MONTHS

After your baby has started eating iron-rich foods, she needs other foods like vegetables and fruit.

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

- Try one new vegetable or fruit at a time.
- Start with mild tasting foods such as squash, peas, sweet potatoes, green or yellow beans, apples, peaches, pears, apricots, plums, avocados, and bananas. You can also give other vegetables and fruits that your family eats.
- Wash and peel fresh vegetables and fruit before using.
- Give your baby cooked and mashed vegetables and fruit. You can mash bananas, papayas, avocados, mangoes, melon, and canned fruits without cooking them. As your baby gets older he can have soft pieces of food.
- Use fresh fruit or canned fruit in juice. If you use baby food fruit avoid “fruit desserts”. They are high in sugar.
- Store-bought combination vegetable and meat dinners have less nutrients. If you use them add extra meat or alternatives and vegetables to your baby’s meal.

What about juice and other drinks?

- Your baby gets enough to drink from breast milk. He does not need juice. You can give your baby tap water or bottled water from a cup if he seems thirsty. Do not give distilled, carbonated, or mineral water.
- If you decide to give juice, wait until your baby is eating fruit and other foods. Serve juice in a cup.
- Give your baby 100% pure fruit juices without added sugar. You do not need to buy special baby juice. Just be sure the juice is pasteurized.
- Do not give your baby more than 1/2 cup (125 ml) of fruit juice per day. You do not need to add water to the juice.
- Do not give your baby fruit drinks, fruit punch, soft drinks, sports drinks, or herbal teas.



FOOD GROUP

TIPS

Vegetables and Fruit	Offer soft, cooked vegetables cut in bite-sized pieces.
	Give pieces of soft, ripe fruit like bananas, peaches, kiwi, and cantaloupe.
Grain Products	Continue to give your baby infant cereal. It is a good source of iron. If your baby refuses to eat it, mix it with fruit or other healthy foods.
	Offer finger foods such as pieces of bagel, dry toast strips, rice, roti, noodles, cooked pasta, flat bread, and unsalted crackers.
Milk and Alternatives	Breast milk is still the most important food. Continue to breastfeed until your baby is two years old or more.
	In addition to breast milk, when your baby is eating a variety of foods every day, you can offer your baby homogenized cow's milk (3.25% milk fat). She should be between nine months and one year old. Give milk in a cup.
	Do not give skim, 1%, 2% milk, or low-fat milk products. Babies need the fat to grow.
	Do not give soy, rice or other vegetarian beverages. They do not have enough fat and may not have vitamin D added to them.
	Never give unpasteurized milk.
	Offer yogurt, cottage cheese, and small cubes of soft cheese or shredded cheese.
Meat and Alternatives	Give bite-size pieces of tender meat, fish, cooked beans, and tofu.
	If your baby refuses meat, try mixing fish, beans or tofu in sweet potatoes or squash to enhance flavour and texture. Be sure your baby has tried each new food on its own first.
	Give cooked egg (yolk or white).
	Thinly spread peanut butter or other nut butters on toast or crackers.
By one year old, your baby should be eating a variety of foods from each food group and drinking liquids from a cup. Babies can go directly from breastfeeding to drinking from a cup.	

At about nine months, your baby can pick things up with her thumb and forefinger. Now is the time to offer small pieces of table foods or "finger foods" for snacks and with meals.

- **Let your baby feed herself with her hands or with a plastic-coated baby spoon. Make sure her hands are clean before eating.**
- **Expect a mess! Making a mess is just part of learning how to eat.**



HELP YOUR BABY BE A HEALTHY EATER

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



- Bring your baby to the table to join in at family mealtimes. Babies learn by watching others. Keep mealtimes pleasant.
- It is best if there are no toys or television to distract your baby.
- Talk to your baby quietly and encourage him while he is eating. Do not pressure your baby to eat. This can make him refuse food even more and may lead to feeding problems.
- Always stay with your baby when he eats.
- Let your baby explore his food with his hands. Let your baby feed himself with his fingers or a spoon when he is able.
- Let your baby decide how much to eat. Never pressure your baby to eat more than he wants. Do not restrict the amount you give her to eat when she seems hungry.
- It is normal for babies to eat different amounts of food each day. It is alright if your baby refuses a meal or two.
- Be patient with new foods. You may need to try new foods many times on different days.
- Do not use games to get your baby to eat.
- Never force food into your baby's mouth.
- Never use food as a reward or a punishment.

You and your baby's responsibilities:

- You are responsible for what your baby is given to eat. You also decide where and when to feed your baby.
- Your baby is responsible for how much and even whether he eats.

MAKING HOMEMADE BABY FOOD

It is easy to make your own baby food. You can use the same healthy foods that you feed your family. Homemade baby food is healthy for your baby. It also:

- saves you money;
- lets your baby try a greater variety of foods;
- helps your baby get used to different textures and tastes; and
- lets your baby eat the same foods as your family.

How do I make my own baby food?

To make baby food you need:

- a food blender;
- baby food mill (grinder)
- a wire sieve and a clean spoon or a potato masher or fork

Wash your hands before you prepare food. Use clean utensils and cookware. Plain foods help baby learn about flavours. You don't need to add sugar, salt, margarine, or butter.

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

FOODS	HOW TO PREPARE
Vegetables and fruit	Wash, peel, pit, and/or seed and slice fresh vegetables or fruit or use frozen. Place vegetables or fruit in a small amount of boiling water. Cook until tender. Drain and keep the cooking water. Mash or blend vegetables or fruit using a small amount of cooking water. You can blend or mash ripe, soft fruits like bananas, mangoes, avocados, and canned fruit without cooking them.
Meat and fish	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. Remove the bones and skin and trim off the fat. Cut meat or flake fish into small pieces. Blend with cooking water or stock.
Meat alternatives	Cook legumes, such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas, according to package directions. Rinse canned beans well. Cook eggs. Use plain tofu. Blend with a little water or mash with a fork.

For more information on making baby food, call your local public health unit.

Your baby will not need puréed or blended foods for long. At seven months offer mashed foods. Next, offer soft pieces of food.

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?

- You must 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 or three 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.

Do not feed your baby directly from the jar or container of baby food unless you're giving your baby the whole amount. Put the food for your baby into a bowl. Throw out any food that has come in contact with your baby's saliva.

How do I keep my baby safe?

- Babies can choke easily. Always stay with your baby while she is eating. Stop feeding if your baby is crying or laughing. Do not feed your baby in a moving car.
- Do not give your baby foods that are hard, small, and round like nuts, popcorn, whole grapes, or hard vegetables.

- Do not give your baby peanut butter on its own. Thinly spread peanut butter or other nut butters on toast and crackers.
- Do not give your baby honey or any food made with honey for the first year. It can cause botulism (food poisoning).
- Swordfish, shark, fresh or frozen tuna steak, canned albacore tuna, marlin, orange roughy and escolar are often high in mercury. Do not give your baby these fish more than once a month.

What should I know about allergies?

- Your baby is more likely to have an allergy if one or both parents or brothers or sisters have allergies, asthma, or eczema.
- You do not have to delay giving your baby foods such as nut products, peanuts, cow's milk products and eggs, to prevent allergies. These foods can be introduced after six months of age.
- Watch for allergic reactions when you offer new foods.
- If your baby has been diagnosed with a food or other allergy, speak to your health care provider.
- Follow the steps on how to start solid foods in the section called How to Start on page 4 of this guide.