

## Feeding Your Baby Solid Foods

At about 6 months your baby is ready to start eating solid foods. Breastmilk is all your baby needs for the first 6 months. Solid foods give your baby extra energy, iron and other nutrients needed for healthy growth. Solid foods also help your baby learn how to eat and enjoy new flavours and textures. This factsheet provides you with tips on how to introduce new and different types of foods and how to make mealtimes go well. It also provides answers to common feeding questions.

If you have questions or concerns, talk to your baby's health care provider or a Registered Dietitian.



### Steps you can take

#### Starting Solid Foods

- | At about 6 months your baby is ready to start solid foods. Your baby is ready when she:
  - | Has good head control.
  - | Can sit up and lean forward.
  - | Can pick up food and try to put it in her mouth.
  - | Can turn her head away to let you know she is full.
- | Continue to breastfeed throughout the day and night, because breastmilk is still the most important food for your baby at this age.

#### What types of food should I offer?

- | Start with iron-rich foods such as:
  - | soft-cooked pureed, mashed or finely minced meat or poultry
  - | mashed or finely minced low-mercury fish such as low-sodium canned salmon with bones mashed or removed
  - | cooked tofu
  - | well-cooked mashed legumes like beans, peas and lentils

- | well-cooked chopped eggs (whites and yolk are both safe)
- | iron-fortified infant cereal
- | Offer your baby iron-rich foods two or more times every day.
- | Once your baby is eating iron-rich foods every day, offer a variety of vegetables and fruit, milk and grain products.
  - | Try cooked mashed sweet potato, squash, soft-cooked pieces of broccoli, carrots, peas and green or yellow beans.
  - | Try soft fruit such as pieces of mango, pears, peaches, banana and applesauce. Remove any peels, seeds or pits.
  - | Try grated cheese, low sodium cottage cheese and yogurt without any added sugar (3.25% M.F. or higher). Wait until 9 months before giving your baby 3.25% homogenized whole milk as a beverage.
  - | Try strips of whole wheat toast or pita bread, macaroni or unsweetened oat loops.
- | Cook food without added salt and sugar.

#### What types of textures should I offer?

- | Offer a variety of textures such as soft foods that have been pureed, mashed, minced or ground. Offer your baby soft foods with lumps before she is nine months old.
- | Offer soft finger foods from six months of age, such as pieces of soft fruit or soft-cooked vegetables or fruit, meat, fish, or poultry that has been ground or finely minced, or whole wheat bread. Offering finger foods from an early age helps your baby to learn how to feed herself.
- | By 12 months your baby should be able to eat from family meals, modified in size and texture to prevent choking.

#### When should I offer solid foods? How much should I feed my baby?

- | Follow your baby's lead. Offer food when she shows interest. A good starting point is to offer solids about two times a day. For example, at breakfast and lunch. As your baby gets a little older, work towards offering solids three to five times a day as meals or snacks.
- | You can offer food before or after you breastfeed.
- | To start, try making 5-10 mL (1-2 tsp) of each food and see how

much your baby takes. Offer more if your baby wants more.

- | The amount of food a baby eats will vary from one day to the next and from one baby to the other. If your baby does not want to eat, try again at the next meal. Do not force her to eat. Try not to compare your baby to another.
- | At 12 months you can start a regular schedule of meals and snacks.

### How will I know if my baby is getting enough food?

- | Your baby will let you know if she is hungry or has had enough to eat. An open mouth means "more food please." A shut mouth, a head turning away from food, or pushing food away means "I've had enough."
- | When your baby is growing faster she will eat more. When your baby is growing slower she will eat less. This is normal.
- | If your baby is growing well, she is getting enough food and breastmilk. Your health care provider should weigh and measure your baby to check her growth. If you are worried, call your baby's health care provider.

### What types of foods should I avoid?

- | Avoid foods your baby can choke on like raw vegetables, nuts and seeds, wieners, hard candy, cough drops, gum, raisins and other dried fruit, whole grapes, fish with bones, popcorn, marshmallows and peanut butter spread thickly.
- | Do not give your baby honey (including pasteurized honey and honey used in cooking or added to food such as yogurt or cereal) until after 12 months. It can cause a serious type of food poisoning called botulism.

### When can I give my breastfed baby cow's milk?

- | Breastfed babies do not need cow's milk. Continue to breastfeed until your baby is 2 years or older. Small amounts of 3.25% homogenized whole milk along with breastmilk can be offered between 9-12 months. Ensure your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods.
- | If cow's milk is your baby's main milk source, do not offer more than 3 cups (750 mL) per day. Too much milk can fill your baby up and not leave room for other foods. Offer milk in a regular cup.

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## Common Questions and Answers

### What if my baby refuses solids at first?

This is common. Try offering solids again every couple of days until she accepts them. Try a different texture, or finger food or a different iron rich food. If your baby is not taking any iron-rich foods by seven months, talk to your baby's health care provider. Iron-rich foods include meats, fish, poultry, tofu, eggs, legumes such as beans, peas and lentils and iron-fortified cereals.

### What should I do if my baby gags on food?

Gagging is normal when learning how to eat. Gagging or coughing food back up may occur when babies are learning how to chew and swallow food. Gagging occurs when food comes too close to the back of the throat without swallowing. Babies often gag to prevent choking on a food.

Try the following tips to keep your baby from gagging:

- | Feed slower.
- | Use a smaller spoon.
- | Put less on the spoon.
- | Offer foods at the table with no distractions so that you and she can focus on eating.
- | Offer textures your baby can handle well. If your baby is gagging on foods mashed with big lumps try smaller lumps.
- | Be careful with the size, shape and texture of finger foods.
- | If your baby gags often, seems to have trouble swallowing, or chokes on food, talk to your health care provider.

### How can I help my baby learn to eat solids and enjoy mealtimes?

- | Include your baby at family meals. Talk, smile and look at your baby. She learns by watching you.
- | Never leave your baby alone while eating.
- | Have your baby sit up straight (not slouched) and buckle her securely into the high chair.
- | Offer foods with different colours and textures that your baby can

chew and swallow easily and safely.

- | Allow your baby to explore with foods. Mashing, smelling, smearing are all part of learning to like foods. Let her make a mess.
- | Avoid distractions for you and your baby, such as TV, toys, telephone calls, radio and pets. This will help you and your baby focus on eating and help prevent choking.
- | Let your baby use her fists and fingers to eat. When your baby reaches for the spoon, let her start to feed herself. Your baby will still use her fingers as utensils for a few years.

My baby sometimes refuses new foods. What should I do?

It may take up to 15 tastes or more before your baby likes a new food. Don't be discouraged. This is common. Do not force your baby to eat. Pressuring your baby to eat does not work.

Try these ideas instead:

- | Offer the refused food again in a few days.
- | Try a different type of food.
- | Serve food at different temperatures.
- | Mix solid food with breastmilk to make it more familiar to your baby.
- | Let your child feed herself using her fingers or fists.
- | Make sure your baby is not getting too much breastmilk, 3.25% homogenized whole milk or juice. Your baby may not be hungry for solid foods if she has had too much to drink.
- | Offer solid foods when you think your baby is most hungry.
- | Have another person feed your baby solids.
- | Feed your baby when you or other family members are eating.
- | Make sure your baby is happy and alert and is not tired. This may increase the chance of her liking a new food.
- | Rather than baby food in a jar, offer your baby food from the family meal. Ensure it is the right texture for baby.

Should I give my baby water or juice?

- | Your baby gets enough to drink from breastmilk. After 6 months you can give your baby small amounts of tap or bottled water in a regular cup. Do not give your baby mineral or carbonated water. Giving your

baby a regular cup helps her learn important drinking skills.

- | After 6 months you can give your baby a small amount of fruit juice, although you do not need to. Do not give your baby more than 125-175 ml (½ to ¾ cup) per day of 100% fruit juice. Offer it in a regular cup as part of a meal or snack. Do not give juice in a “sippy” cup or bottle. It does not need to be diluted.
- | Do not give your baby fruit drinks, fruit punch, soft drinks or sports drinks.

Should I avoid giving my baby foods that have a higher risk of allergies?

Some foods are more likely than others to cause allergic reactions. These foods are known as “common food allergens” and include many of the important first foods that are offered to your baby. There is no reason to avoid giving your baby these foods. They are nutritious and some are a source of iron. Avoiding or waiting to give these foods will not prevent allergies, even in babies with a family history of food allergy.

If you are concerned about food allergies, introduce the common food allergens one at a time, and wait two days before you offer common allergens. This makes it easier to tell which food is the problem if your baby has an allergic reaction.

- | Watch for signs of allergies when you introduce a new food such as: rash, hives, runny nose, itchy watery eyes, vomiting, diarrhea or breathing problems.

Common food allergens include:

- | eggs
- | fish
- | milk products like yogurt and cheese
- | nuts like almonds or cashew
- | peanuts or peanut butter
- | sesame
- | shellfish such as lobster or shrimp
- | soy such as tofu
- | wheat (including iron-fortified infant cereals).

If you have questions or if there is a history of food allergy in your family (parents or siblings of your baby), talk with your health care professional.

How many bowel movements should my baby have each day?

Starting solids can change the colour and texture of your baby's stools. It can also change how often she has bowel movements. Some days your baby may not have a bowel movement. On other days your baby may have up to four bowel movements. If stools are soft and easy to pass, your baby is not constipated. If you have concerns, talk with your baby's health care provider.

Special considerations

How much Vitamin D supplement should I give my baby?

- | Give your breastfed baby 400 IU of Vitamin D each day until your baby is two years old.
- | If you have any questions about whether your baby should take a vitamin D supplement talk to your health care professional.

My baby is not eating much solid food at 10 months. Should I be concerned?

- | Some baby's progress with eating faster than others. Your baby may eat a different amount of food than other babies. She will also have her own likes and dislikes. Try not to compare your baby to other babies.
- | By 10 months old, talk to a health care professional if your baby:
  - | Is not eating solid foods.
  - | Eats only a few solid foods.
  - | Eats only pureed textures.



## Additional Resources

- 1 Sample Meal Plans for Feeding Your Baby  
[http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?  
Portal=UbY=&id=JMzpWgI=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMzpWgI=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
  
- 1 Finger Foods for Babies 6 -12 months  
[https://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?  
Portal=UbY=&id=JMfqWgO=&PreviewHandout=bA==](https://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfqWgO=&PreviewHandout=bA==)

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## Notes

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