

Starting Solids with Your Baby

At 6 months your baby is ready to start eating foods and needs iron-rich foods for healthy growth. This factsheet will provide you with tips on how to introduce new and different types of foods, wean from the bottle and breast and transition to different types of foods. It will help to make eating an enjoyable experience for you and your child.

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



Steps you can take

How much breast milk or iron-fortified formula or homo milk (3.25% M.F.) should I feed my baby?

6-9 month old baby

- Offer breast milk or iron-fortified formula first, then solids. Although your baby will be starting solids, breast milk or iron-fortified formula remains the most important food for your baby.
- Breastfeed on demand even during the night. Your body can make enough breast milk for your baby.
- Offer your formula fed baby 4-7 feeds per day for a total amount of 500-1100 mL (17-37 oz).
- Homo milk (3.25% M.F.) should not be offered until your baby is at least 9 months of age.

9-12 month old baby

- Offer solids first and then breast milk or iron-fortified formula.
- At this age, food starts to replace breast milk or formula as the main source of nutrition.
- Once your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods, you can

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gradually introduce homo milk (3.25% M.F.) and give less formula or breast milk.

- At 9 months you can offer your baby 3-4 formula feeds per day for a total amount of 300-900 mL (10-30 oz).
- By 12 months some babies no longer need formula if they are eating a variety of foods including iron-rich ones. By 12 months offer your baby up to 3 feeds of formula per day for a total amount of 600 mL (20 oz).
- Remember each baby is different!

How much food should I feed my baby?

- Each baby is unique. The amount that a baby eats will vary from one day to the next, and from one baby to the other. Try not to compare your baby to another.
- To start, try making 15-30 mL or 1-2 tablespoons of each food and see how much your baby takes. Offer more if your baby wants more.
- If he doesn't want to eat, try again at the next meal. See suggestions below to help baby with eating solids.
- When your baby is growing faster he will eat more. When your baby is growing slower he will eat less. This is normal. If your baby is growing well he is getting enough to eat.
- Start by offering solids at breakfast and lunch, then offer solids at dinner too.
- By nine months you can offer solids at breakfast, lunch and dinner. You could also try solids as mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks.

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

- Your baby will let you know if he 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 "stop feeding me please".
- If your baby is growing well, he is getting enough food and breast

milk or iron fortified formula. Your health care provider should weigh and measure your baby to check his growth. If you are worried call your baby's health care provider.

How should I introduce foods?

- Introduce one new food at a time. Wait at least 2 days before trying a different food. This makes it easier to tell if your baby is allergic to any food.
 - Watch for symptoms of allergies when you introduce a new food such as: rash, hives, runny nose, itchy watery eyes, vomiting, and diarrhea or breathing problems.
- Once each food has been well tolerated and the baby shows no signs of allergies, you can start to combine them. For example:
 - Pureed meat with carrots or blueberries and applesauce.
 - Mixed grain cereals once each grain has been tried on its own

What types of food and textures should I offer?

The rate of progressing to different types of foods and textures varies widely among babies. Some babies will progress faster than others. Some general guidelines are.

At 6 months when your baby can sit in a high chair with support he is ready to start solids. Your baby's first foods should be iron-rich.

- Start with thin purees which run off a spoon. Then offer thicker purees. Gradually move to semi-solids.
- Try the following iron-rich foods: pureed meat, poultry, low-mercury fish such as low sodium canned salmon with bones mashed or removed, tofu, well-cooked legumes like beans, peas and lentils, eggs and single-grain iron-fortified infant cereal, like oatmeal, rice or barley.
- Once your baby is eating iron-rich foods every day offer a variety of vegetables and fruit.
 - Try broccoli, carrots, apricots, mango, peas or pears.
 - Remember to remove any peels, seeds or pits.

- Mash or mince the vegetables to the right texture for your baby. Fruits do not have to be cooked. Choose soft fruit and simply mash banana or ripe mango, pears, peaches or other type of fruit.
- Cook food for your baby without added salt, sugar, spices, fats or oils.
- When your baby can sit in a high chair without support and is able to eat semi solids, offer soft-mashed foods without lumps.
 - Try mashed sweet potato, peas, minced chicken, stews, dhal (lentils).
- When your baby can crawl offer:
 - ground or soft-mashed food with tiny soft noticeable lumps such as fork-mashed spaghetti with tomato-meat sauce.
 - food with soft texture such as soft pieces of peeled, ripe pears.
 - crunchy food that dissolves (e.g. baby biscuits).

At about 9 months when your baby starts to walk with help offer:

- coarsely chopped foods such as scrambled eggs and toast cut into strips.
- foods with noticeable pieces such as cottage cheese with diced soft strawberries.
- foods with soft to moderate texture such as cooked, chopped broccoli with minced or bite-size pieces of chicken and brown rice.
- Finger foods such as dry toast, ripe banana or tofu cubes.
- Avoid foods your baby can choke on like raw hard vegetables, candies, popcorn, whole grapes, nuts or thickly spread peanut butter.
- Once your 9-month old baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods, you can offer homo milk (3.25% M.F.) in a cup. You can also offer cheese or plain yogurt without sugar added.
- Continue to offer homo milk (3.25% M.F.) until 24 months. Other

milks do not have enough fat or other nutrients your baby needs. After 24 months, you can switch to the milk or fortified soy beverage the rest of your family drinks. Soy milk is not recommended for children under 2 years.

By 12 months most babies can eat many of the foods made for family meals and be drinking from a cup. You do not need to cook special foods for your child.

Common Questions and Answers

What if my baby refuses solids at first?

- This is normal. Try offering solids again every couple of days until she accepts them. 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 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. Gagging is part of the normal learning process of how to eat. Babies often gag to prevent from choking on a food.

Try the following tips to keep your baby from gagging:

- Feed a little slower.
- Use a smaller spoon.
- Put a little less on the spoon.
- Offer foods at the table with no distractions so that you and he 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.
- If your baby gags often or 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. They learn by watching you.
- Never leave your baby alone while eating.
- Have your baby sit up straight (not slouched) and be buckled securely in to the high chair.
- Offer foods with different colours and textures your baby can chew and swallow easily.
- Allow your baby to explore with foods. Mashing, smelling, smearing are all part of learning to like foods. Let them 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.
- Let your baby use his 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 8-10 tastes or more before your baby likes a new food. Don't be discouraged. This is normal. Do not force feed your baby. 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. Make sure to leave at least 2 days in between trying new foods.
- Serve food at different temperatures.
- Mix solids with breast milk or formula to make it more familiar to your baby.
- Finger feed your child instead of using a spoon.

- Feed him solids before the breast or iron-fortified formula. Your baby may not be interested in eating food if he is still full from formula or breast milk.
- 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 him 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.

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 he 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 doctor.

What are some tips for weaning from breast or bottle to cups?

Breastfeeding is healthy for you and your baby. If you are able, continue to breastfeed for the first two years. Try to breastfeed in the morning and/or evening if you are going back to work. If you can, express breast milk and offer it to your baby in a cup over the day.

If you are starting to wean your baby from the breast or the bottle do it slowly, one step at a time. There is no need to rush. It may take several weeks or even months. Do it at a pace that feels right for you and your baby. Try to:

- Wean one feed at a time. Choose the feed that is your baby's least favourite.
- Make sure that your baby is content and not tired or hungry when starting to wean.
- Change the breastfeeding routine. Try to feed at a different place

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or time.

- Go from breast to a cup so you won't have to wean off bottles. By 6 months your baby is ready to start drinking from a cup and no longer needs a bottle.
- Let your baby choose a cup to drink from.
- Offer expressed breast milk or iron-fortified formula in a cup. Once happy with drinking from a cup, change breast milk or iron-fortified formula to homo milk (3.25% M.F.). Don't change to homo milk (3.25% M.F.) until 9 months of age.
- Have someone else feed the baby. The baby may accept a cup if it comes from someone else.
- Offer milk at different temperatures. Try warming it rather than offering it cold.
- Wait a few days once you have successfully weaned your baby from one feed before weaning the next feed.

Special Considerations

Vitamin D needs up to 12 months

All babies need 400 IU of Vitamin D each day.

- Exclusively breastfeed babies or formula feed babies who drink less than 500 mL (2 cups) of formula need 400 IU from a supplement each day.
- Babies who drink between 500-1000 mL (2-4 cups) need 200 IU of Vitamin D from a supplement each day.
- Babies who drink more than 1 L (4 cups) of formula do not need additional vitamin D,

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