


## Why should I follow guidelines for feeding my baby?

Feeding your baby is one of the most important jobs you have. In the first year of life, your baby grows and develops quickly. Good nutrition is very important during this time. Knowing how and when to start your baby on solid foods may be confusing. This information will help you meet your baby's nutritional needs.

| Age                       | Watch for these skills  | Foods to offer  |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Birth to 6 months:</b> |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use breast milk or infant formula. Do this until your baby is 1 year old.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>6 to 7 months:</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses hands to help hold the bottle steady.</li> <li>Holds head steady.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue breast milk or formula.</li> <li>Add single grain infant cereal to your baby's diet. Do not add cereal to a bottle unless directed by health care provider.</li> <li>Add pureed or blended foods such as fruits, vegetables and meats to your baby's diet. It does not matter what order you start these foods.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>7 to 8 months:</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starts to sit without support.</li> <li>Starts to hold a spoon while caregiver feeds.</li> <li>Opens mouth for spoon.</li> <li>Tries to bite food.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue breast milk/formula, cereal, and purees.</li> <li>Add new purees and multigrain cereals to your baby's diet. Offer solids 1 to 3 times per day.</li> <li>Start to offer breast milk or formula as sips from an open cup with meals.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>8 to 10 months:</b>    |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can bite into foods.</li> <li>Continues to work on bringing spoon to mouth.</li> <li>Starts to use fingers for feeding.</li> <li>Eats with up-and-down munching movement.</li> <li>Takes sips from open cup.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue breast milk/formula, cereals, and pureed fruits, vegetables, and meats.</li> <li>Add mashed foods, such as cooked beans. Offer a variety of solids 3 times per day.</li> <li>Continue to offer breast milk or formula as sips from open cup with meals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Add finger foods to your baby's diet:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toast, crackers</li> <li>Cooked noodles, cooked rice</li> <li>Soft fruit slices (bananas, pears)</li> <li>Cheese</li> <li>Solid foods that melt in the mouth easily (puffs, dry cereal, cookies that crumble easily)</li> </ul> |

|                                |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <p><b>10 to 12 months:</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can hold spoon and bring it to mouth, but cannot use it for feeding on own.</li> <li>• Helps hold cup.</li> <li>• Starts to eat on own using fingers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue foods listed above for 8 to 10 months.</li> <li>• Add finely diced table foods, like pancakes with syrup or pieces of deli meats.</li> <li>• Add plain yogurt, cottage cheese and scrambled eggs.</li> <li>• <b>Add pasteurized whole milk once your child reaches 1 year old.</b></li> <li>• Continue to offer breast milk, formula, or whole milk (after 1 year) in an open cup with meals.</li> <li>• Offer solids at 3 meals and up to 2-3 snacks per day.</li> </ul> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|

### Tips for feeding

- Do not prop your baby's bottle. When bottle feeding, cradle your baby in a semi-upright position and support their head.
- Try one "single-ingredient" new food at a time. Wait 2 to 3 days before starting another. This gives you time to watch for any allergic reactions.
- Infants less than 6 months of age do not need extra water for hydration even in hot, dry climates. If your baby is sick, talk with their doctor before giving your baby fluids other than breast milk or infant formula.
- Do not give your baby fruit juice, Kool-Aid®, fruit punch, soda, sugar water, tea or coffee.
- Do not give your baby fried foods, high fat gravies, sauces or processed meats such as bologna or hot dogs.
- Keep your baby in a highchair when feeding solids.

### Food Allergens

Once your baby is eating foods, you can also feed them foods with common allergens. This means you can offer them safe forms of peanuts, wheat, eggs, and fish. Here are some ideas for safely introducing these foods:

- Add 2 teaspoons of creamy peanut butter or peanut powder to a jar of smooth baby food, like bananas
- Peanut puffs
- Whole wheat infant cereal
- For older babies (10 months or older): scrambled eggs, small pieces of flaky fish
- Look for jarred or other premade infant foods that contain these common allergens

Talk to your doctor if your baby has food allergies or if you are unsure if your baby should be eating these common allergens.

**Do not give your child foods from the list below.** Babies can choke on small pieces and hard, thick, or sticky food such as:

- Grapes
- Raw vegetables
- Raisins
- Gum
- Nuts
- Pretzels
- Chips
- Popcorn
- Candy
- Hot dogs
- Fruit Leather
- Peanut butter\*

\*Babies can choke on thick clumps of peanut butter. It is okay to give your baby peanut butter if it is mixed into a puree or spread thinly on a cracker or piece of toast.

**Do not use sugar, honey, salt or pepper** on your baby's food. Uncooked honey and corn syrup (i.e. Karo Syrup®) may cause a kind of infant food poisoning called botulism. Do not give these to a child younger than one year.

## Supplements

### Vitamin D

- All breastfed babies should be given 400 IU (International Units) of Vitamin D each day starting the first few days of life. This will prevent rickets. Vitamin D should be given until breastfeeding stops.
- Iron-fortified formula does not have enough vitamin D for babies. If your baby is drinking less than 33 ounces of standard infant formula per day, add 400 IU infant vitamin D drops.



### Iron

- Breastfed babies have enough iron until 4 to 6 months old. Talk with your baby's doctor to see if they need an iron supplement at this age
- Iron-fortified infant formula, along with age-appropriate solids, can give enough iron and zinc until your child is one year old.

It is important to give breast milk and/or formula for at least the first year. Do not use whole milk until after your child is one year old.

## Baby-Led Weaning

Some families choose to skip traditional pureed baby food and go straight to offering soft table foods. This is often referred to as “baby-led weaning” because the baby is in charge of picking up the foods and feeding themselves instead of a caregiver feeding them by spoon.

**There is very little information on the safety of baby-led weaning**, which is why there are a few important things to keep in mind:

- Do not offer foods that could make a baby choke (see list on page 2 of this handout).
- A caregiver should always be present while the baby is feeding themselves to engage with them and to help them if needed.
- It is still important for baby to learn spoon feeding skills for purees in addition to soft table foods. Purees to offer could include: well-mashed or blended fruits and vegetables, refried beans, hummus, yogurt or creamed soups.
- Breastfed infants may require a supplemental source of iron if they are not receiving iron rich or iron-fortified baby foods like pureed cereals and meats.

**ALERT:** Call your child’s doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**