



Feeding Your Baby

The First Year and Beyond

Sources

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.HealthyChildren.org

National Dairy Council
www.NationalDairyCouncil.org

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
www.EatRight.org



www.MilkMeansMore.org

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Feeding your newborn baby should be one of the most natural things in the world. After all, a baby eats only breastmilk or formula for about the first six months of life! But what may sound simple before the baby arrives can quickly become overwhelming and complex when you are holding an actual, hungry baby.

During the first 12 months of life, babies' food intake goes through several stages. At first, they need only breastmilk or formula. Their digestive systems cannot handle solid foods yet, they don't have the physical ability to eat solid foods and eating solid foods before four months of age may increase their risk of food allergies.

Beginning around **six months** of age, babies can start to eat pureed foods as their nutritional needs and eating abilities increase.

Around **nine to 12 months**, babies continue to develop new motor skills for and a greater interest in eating solid foods.

At **12 months**, babies no longer need breastmilk or formula to meet their nutritional needs and can fully join in the family meals.

All of this happens in just one year!

Knowing when your child is ready for each new stage can be exciting and confusing. In this booklet we provide advice from experts on the signs to look for at each new stage of feeding. We give you examples of what and how much foods to give at each stage. We also provide tips on safe food choices and practices that can help establish healthy eating habits for your baby during the first year and beyond.



Birth to Six Months:

Establishing a feeding
routine with your baby





The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding as the sole source of nutrition for babies until they are about six months old; it can be continued for as long as both mother and baby desire it, but to at least 12 months of age.

In the first few days to a week after your baby is born, you will likely focus on making sure the baby latches onto the breast correctly. Making sure your baby has a good latch will send your body a message to make more milk and cause your full milk supply to come in.

When needed, infant formulas can provide excellent nutrition for your baby. They are made specifically for a babies' nutritional needs and digestive systems. Babies younger than 12 months should not be given cow's milk. Their digestive systems cannot break down the protein and other minerals found in cow's milk.

Timing and Amount of Feedings

Every baby is different, but in general, this is how often babies should be fed:

- **Newborns** – Every 2-3 hours
- **Around 4 months old** – Every 3 hours
- **Around 6 months old** – Every 4-5 hours

This is about how much a baby should eat:

- **Newborns** – In general, about 1-2 ounces of breastmilk or formula per feeding. This increases to about 2-3 ounces by two weeks of age.
- **Between 2-4 months old** - 4 to 6 ounces per feeding
- **Around 6 months** - up to 8 ounces per feeding



Good to Know

- **Putting cereal in a bottle may be a choking hazard** – and there is no evidence it will help your baby sleep longer! You may hear from others that adding baby cereal to a bottle can help your baby sleep through the night – or at least longer than two to three hours at a time. However, offering cereal in a bottle before a baby's body is ready can increase the chances of him gagging or inhaling the thickened mixture into his lungs.
- **Babies don't need any other fluids**, including water or juice, at this age. Breastmilk or formula provides all they need.
- **Letting your baby fall asleep sucking on a bottle can cause cavities.** The breastmilk or formula from the bottle can pool in your baby's mouth leading to serious tooth decay, known as nursing-bottle cavities.

Storage Tips

- Always refrigerate unused breast milk or formula.
- Use refrigerated breastmilk within four days; after that freeze it for up to six months.
- Thawed breastmilk can be stored in a refrigerator, but use within 24 hours or discard.
- Use refrigerated formula within 24 hours.
- Warm a bottle of breastmilk or formula in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes. Never microwave a bottle because it heats the liquid unevenly and there could be parts that are too hot and burn your baby's mouth.

Six Months:

Adding new foods
to your baby's diet





Babies are ready to start solid foods around six months of age. This is a general guideline based on whether your baby can:

- Sit up with little support: Your baby should be able to sit in a high chair with good head control.
- Move food from a spoon to the back of the mouth and swallow it.
- Show interest in food by reaching for it from other's plates or watching others eat.

A single grain-based cereal, such as wheat or rice cereal specifically made for babies and easily mixed with breastmilk or formula is a common first food for babies. Pureed meats, including chicken, beef and turkey, are rich in iron and zinc and also recommend as a first food.

You can gradually add other pureed foods as your baby tolerates them. This can include pureed vegetables, fruits and even meats. Make sure to try one new food at a time and wait a few days before introducing another one to see how your baby handles each food.

Timing and Amount of Feedings

At this point, **breastmilk or formula is still the primary source of nutrition for your baby**. Between the ages of six-12 months, babies eat up to eight ounces of breastmilk or formula per feeding, although the number of feedings will vary as babies start solid foods.

- Start with giving your baby two to three spoonful's of food and gradually increase, following your baby's lead.
- Start by offering solid foods late in the afternoon or early evening after your baby has had most of her feedings, but may still be hungry.



Good to Know



- **Keep offering a variety of foods**, even if your baby rejects some at first. It can take many tries for babies to accept a new food.
- Although many people recommend starting vegetables before fruits, **there is no evidence that your baby won't like vegetables if fruit is given first**. Babies are born liking sweet foods and the order of foods will not change this.
- Within a few months of starting solids, **your baby's daily diet should include a variety of foods**, such as breast milk, formula or both; meats and fish; cereal; vegetables; fruits; eggs; yogurt and cheese.
- You probably don't need to hold off giving your baby foods that are more likely to cause allergic reactions, such as eggs, peanut butter, soy or dairy products. **There is no evidence that waiting to introduce these foods will prevent allergies to them.**
- Most babies at this age can **learn to drink small amounts of liquid from a cup or glass** that someone else holds.

Nine to 12 Months:

Moving from
purees to solids





During this stage, your baby will be eating more and more solid foods and starting to wean off of breastmilk or formula. Your baby will still need the nutrition from breastmilk or formula until 12 months of age, but think of this stage as training for joining the rest of the family for meals by one year of age!

Babies are ready to move from puree foods to soft solid foods when they can sit up and bring their hands to their mouth. Babies start to develop a fine motor skill at this age called the “pincer grasp” that means they can pick up small pieces of food between the thumb and index finger.



Timing and Amount of Feedings

- By this age, you and your baby will have a fairly set feeding schedule. You can start feeding solid soft foods first, followed by breastmilk or formula to make sure your baby is full.
- Breast or formula feedings will likely decrease to three to four feedings a day by this point; each feeding will be around six to eight ounces.
- Offer a balanced diet of the five food groups: Grains, fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy foods such as cheese, plain yogurt and cottage cheese (but not cow's milk until after 12 months of age).
- Offer small bites of these foods a little at a time, giving more as your baby wants more. Every baby will eat different amounts, and remember, breastmilk or formula still provides a lot of the nutrition at this stage.



Good to Know



- **Start with small, soft and easily digestible foods to avoid choking.** See our “Safe and Unsafe Starting Foods” section for examples.
- Accept that **babies are going to be messy at this stage.** Getting food from the hand to the mouth is a learning process for a baby!
- Try not to stress out about whether your baby is getting enough to eat. **Babies know when they are hungry and when they are full;** just follow your baby’s cues and stick to your breastfeeding or formula schedule.



12 Months and Beyond:

Weaning off breastmilk
or formula and establishing
healthy eating habits





Congratulations, your baby is a year old and is now a toddler!

You can start to serve your baby whole fat cow's milk as a beverage. Milk is one of the best food sources of calcium, which builds strong bones and teeth. It's also one of the few sources of vitamin D, which helps the body absorb calcium and is crucial for bone growth. Milk also provides protein for growth, and carbohydrates for energy.

It is important to offer whole fat cow's milk (not 2%, non-fat or low-fat) until at least two years of age because it has the calories and fat needed for growth and development—especially brain development.

Timing and Amount of Feedings

- Your toddler should be eating three meals and two to three snacks per day, similar to the rest of the family. Do your best to offer these meals and snacks at the same time each day; toddlers like routine and will eat better this way.
- The amount of food your toddler eats at each meal can vary greatly at this point. One day it may be a lot and the next day hardly anything! This is normal, so don't become alarmed. Continue offering a balance of grains, fruits, vegetables, protein and dairy.
- Your toddler's stomach is still small at this age, so trust him to know how much to eat, even if it isn't all the food on the plate.





Good to Know

- If you give your child juice at this point, it should be **no more than ½ cup per day and 100% fruit juice** for the most nutrition. Children do not need pop because it has no nutrients in it.
- It is common for toddlers to sometimes eat a favorite food for every meal every day for a certain period of time. This is called a “food jag.” **Continue to offer other foods** and children will eventually move on and eat something else.
- **Eating together as a family encourages bonding** and can set a good example of healthy eating habits for your toddler.
- Watching television during meal or snack time can distract your toddler from eating, so **leave TV for another time during the day**.
- Eating delicious foods is one of the joys of life, so **it is important that children be allowed to enjoy all foods**. Restricting or forbidding foods just makes children want them more. However, children as young as one year old can learn that it is okay to enjoy sweet or higher fat foods as treats once in a while – not every day.

Well, there it is: The What, When and How of feeding your baby. Caring for a child this age can be a challenge. We hope these suggestions will make your life a little easier so you can enjoy and appreciate your amazing and growing baby!

For more information, we encourage you to refer to these online resources:

- American Academy of Pediatrics
www.HealthyChildren.org
- National Dairy Council
www.NationalDairyCouncil.org
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
www.EatRight.org
- United Dairy Industry of Michigan
www.MilkMeansMore.org



Safe and Unsafe Starting Foods*

Safe Starting Foods

Dry breakfast cereals that easily dissolve

Crackers that easily dissolve

Small pieces of soft bread or tortillas

Small pieces of pancakes or waffles

Well-cooked, small pieces of noodles

Soft, canned or cooked peeled fruit, cut into small pieces

Soft, canned or cooked vegetables, cut into small pieces

Small, pea-sized pieces of cooked meat (chicken, turkey, beef, pork)

Tiny cubes of soft tofu

Cheese, cut into small bite-sized pieces

Yogurt or cottage cheese

Unsafe Starting Foods

Grapes, berries or raisins

Fruit that is under ripe, dried or unpeeled

Raw or undercooked vegetables

Corn

Uncut hot dogs or luncheon meats

Peanut butter on a spoon
(Peanut butter can be spread thinly on a piece of bread or cracker)

Nuts and seeds

Potato chips, tortilla chips and popcorn

Candy, gum, marshmallows

Large chunks of any food

*Check with your pediatrician before starting your child on finger foods and if you have any questions about these foods.



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