

# Feeding Babies Age 6 - 12 Months

## Baby's first food

- Until 6 months of age, your baby only needs breastmilk and a vitamin D supplement. After starting solids, continue to breastfeed or provide breastmilk to 2 years and beyond, for as long as you and your child wish.
- If your baby does not receive breastmilk, offer a store-bought infant formula until 9-12 months.

## What about other milks?

- Wait until your baby is 9-12 months old and eating iron-rich foods daily before offering whole (3.25% milk fat), pasteurized cow milk. If offering goat milk, choose a full-fat milk with added folic acid and vitamin D.
- Lower fat milks and plant-based beverages (e.g. soy, rice, almond, or coconut) do not provide enough fat and other nutrients for babies.

## What about water or juice?

- At 6 months, you can offer sips of water from an open cup.
- Babies do not need juice. If you choose to offer it, wait until your baby is at least 6 months old. Choose pasteurized, 100% fruit juice, offer it at a meal or snack time, and limit it to 1/2 cup (125 mL) per day.

## When do I start solid foods?

At about 6 months, your baby is ready for solids foods if they:

- have good head and neck control,
- can sit up and lean forward, and
- open their mouth wide when offered food.

## How do I start?

- At about 6 months, your baby needs more iron. Start with iron-rich foods such as meat, chicken, fish, beans, lentils, and iron-fortified cereals.
- Include your baby in family meals; store-bought baby foods are not needed.
- Offer soft finger foods or offer mashed foods by spoon.
- Avoid putting cereal or other solids into bottles.

## How much food should I offer?

- Start with small amounts and increase based on your baby's appetite.
- Your baby knows how much to eat; follow their cues.
- If your baby is still hungry, they will continue to open their mouth for food.
- When your baby is full, they may close their mouth, turn their head, or push food away.

## Safety tips

- Stay with your baby while they are eating or drinking.
- Wait until 1 year before offering any honey (due to risk of infant botulism).
- Choose pasteurized dairy products.
- Avoid foods that can cause choking:
  - ✗ hot dogs, wieners, and pepperoni
  - ✗ hard and soft candy
  - ✗ marshmallows
  - ✗ popcorn
  - ✗ whole peanuts, nuts, and seeds
  - ✗ globs of peanut butter
  - ✗ whole grapes
  - ✗ hard, raw vegetables
  - ✗ raisins and other dried fruit

## Tips for happy mealtimes

- Offer food at regular times through the day; you choose what foods to offer.
- Your baby decides how much to eat; this will change from day to day.
- Let your baby try to feed themselves – it is messy, but that's part of learning!
- It may take 15-20 tries before your baby accepts a new food.



## 6 Months

Continue to breastfeed or provide breastmilk. If that is not possible, offer a store-bought formula.

Offer iron-rich solid foods two or more times each day. Good choices include:

- meat (e.g. beef, moose, elk, pork), chicken, eggs, fish (cooked, moist, and soft, minced, mashed or shredded)
- beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu (cooked and mashed)
- iron-fortified cereals

Offer soft finger foods, or mince or mash foods with a fork. Your baby's foods do not need to be pureed.

Start by offering a small amount of solids each day. Increase the amount based on your baby's interest and appetite.

Common food allergens can be introduced at about 6 months. For more information, see HealthLink BC's "[Reducing Risk of Food Allergy in Your Baby](#)".



## 6 - 9 Months

Continue to breastfeed or provide breastmilk. If that is not possible, offer a store-bought formula.

Work toward offering two or three meals and one or two snacks each day.

Offer iron-rich foods two or more times each day. When your baby is regularly eating iron-rich foods, offer other foods such as:

- yogurt, grated cheese, cottage cheese
- pasta, rice, cereal, crackers
- soft pieces of fruit and vegetables

Include sources of fat, like oil, butter, fatty fish, and nut butters (e.g. mixed into cereal).

Offer small amounts from the family meal. Offer more if your baby shows interest.

Eat together with your baby and share the same foods when possible. Even if your baby does not eat much, they learn from you and by seeing, touching, and tasting a variety of family foods.



## 9 - 12 Months

Continue to breastfeed or provide breastmilk. If that is not possible, offer a store-bought formula.

Wait until your baby is 9-12 months old *and* regularly eating a variety of iron-rich foods before offering cow's milk. Limit cow's milk to 3 cups (750 mL) per day.

Offer three meals and one or two snacks each day.

Offer iron-rich foods two or more times each day. Continue to increase the variety and textures of foods you offer.

By 1 year, your baby should be eating the same foods as the rest of the family. Offer a variety of textures and finger foods from the family meal.

Learning to eat takes time and patience. It's messy! It may seem like your baby is doing more playing than eating. This is all part of learning. At their own pace, they will learn to enjoy a variety of family foods.



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