



The Royal  
**Children's**  
Hospital  
Melbourne



# Guide to foods

Baby's first year

# Introduction

The first year of baby's life is full of exciting changes. Going from breast or formula feeding alone to solid foods is important for baby's growth and development.

This guide covers the steps at each of the main age milestones:

- birth to 6 months
- around 6 months
- 6-12 months and
- around 12 months

Pictures of the different aspects of learning to eat are shown at each age range. These are:

- baby's physical development
- food textures and baby's eating skills
- mealtime environment and feeding cues
- foods to give
- drinks to give

Up to  
6 months



## Breastfeeding

Breastmilk is the best food and drink for your newborn baby. Breastmilk or infant formula is all babies need until around 6 months. At this stage babies can only suck and swallow breastmilk or infant formula.

Babies grow and develop very quickly in the first 6 months. Breastfeed whenever your baby seems hungry. They are not ready to eat solid foods yet.

Continue breastfeeding or infant formula while foods are introduced.

All new mothers need support to learn to breastfeed. Any amount of breastmilk is better than none.

Around  
6 months





## Drinks

Breastmilk or infant formula is all babies need until around six months. Continue breastfeeding or infant formula while foods are introduced.

## Physical

Signs baby is ready to start solids: can sit with support and has good head control, watches others eat, opens mouth when food is offered, and reaches out to grab food and spoons.

You may see some of these signs from an early age, but for most babies breastmilk or infant formula is all they need until around six months.

## Textures and skills

First foods can be mashed, smooth or in pieces depending on your preference.



## Mealtime environment and feeding cues

Babies may refuse new foods when first offered. It may take several times before a new food is accepted. Baby may only take a spoonful at first, but this will increase with time and practice.

## Foods and amounts

Start with infant cereals (with added iron), vegetables, fruit, meat, chicken, fish, cooked tofu and legumes. Start with 1 or 2 foods at a time so your baby can learn about the flavour and texture of each new food. Make sure baby is sitting comfortably and is not too hungry or too full, or distressed, for example offer 1 teaspoon of first foods between milk feeds.



Between  
6-12 months







## Drinks

Continue breastfeeding or infant formula while foods are introduced through the first year of life. Introduce drinking water in a cup from about 6 months of age.

## Physical

Baby starts to feed self pieces of food. Give baby a small spoon to self-feed, even while you continue to give most food.

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## Textures and skills

Increase textures to include mashed and pieces of food to encourage chewing, self-feeding and accepting new foods.

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## Mealtime environment and feeding cues

Be patient and prepared. Babies make a mess as they learn to eat. Learn together about your baby's eating. Increase the amount and type of foods as your baby shows interest. Stop feeding your baby if they are full, tired or irritable.

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## Foods and amounts

Offer other cereals, egg, bread/toast, pasta, rice, nut pastes, and full fat dairy foods such as cheese, yoghurt and cow's milk in cereal (or expressed breastmilk or infant formula). Increase the number of meals offered each day once baby eats 2-3 tablespoons at a time. There is no need to delay or avoid foods like egg, peanut paste, wheat, cow's milk and fish to prevent food allergy.



Around  
12 months







## Drinks

Stop bottles and infant formula from around 12 months. Keep breastfeeding for as long as mother and baby desire. Offer full-fat cow's milk as a drink after 12 months in a cup. Water in a cup is now the main drink.

## Physical

Able to eat chopped up family meals and finger foods. Encourage independent eating.

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## Textures and skills

Encourage self-feeding when your baby shows interest.



## Mealtime environment and feeding cues

Be a positive role model; children learn to eat by watching other people.

Stay with your child while eating to encourage social interaction and learning about eating; and to avoid choking accidents.

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## Foods and amounts

Continue increasing the variety and amount of healthy family foods. The amount of food babies eat, and their interest in food may change from day to day. This is normal and shouldn't cause any concerns if your baby is growing well, and is generally happy and healthy.



## Food textures

Increasing textures of baby foods is important to encourage chewing and accepting new foods. If first foods are smooth or finely mashed, quickly increase to coarsely mashed and pieces of food. Also encourage finger foods such as pieces of fruit, vegetables and bread to encourage chewing and self-feeding. By 12 months, offer a wide variety of cut up healthy family foods. This helps with physical development and encourages children to learn to eat by themselves.

### Around 6 months

First foods can be mashed, smooth or in soft pieces.



Mashed vegetables



Infant rice cereal



Smooth fruit



Vegetable pieces

### Between 6-12 months

Increase textures to include mashed and pieces of food to encourage chewing, self-feeding and accepting new foods.



Minced meat/veg



Bread



Vegetable pieces



Pasta



Rice



Fruit pieces

### Around 12 months

Encourage self-feeding of family foods.



Fruit pieces



Sandwich



Vegetable pieces



Red meat or chicken



Fruit pieces



Salad

## Additional information

- Do not add salt, sugar or other additives to your baby's food.
- Processed foods with fat, sugar and/or salt (e.g. cakes, biscuits, chips, fried foods) are not recommended for babies.
- Avoid small hard foods such as whole nuts and uncooked vegetables, due to the risk of choking.
- Fruit juice, cordial, soft drinks, flavoured water, unpasteurised milks, soy milk, goat's milk, rice/oat milks, caffeinated drinks, tea, coffee and herbal drinks are not recommended for babies.
- Avoid raw egg and honey due to risk of bacteria.
- Sit with your baby while eating to encourage social interaction, learning about food and to avoid choking accidents.
- Enjoy healthy meals together as a family. This helps your baby develop healthy eating habits for the future.
- Seek advice from your health care professional if you are worried about your baby's eating, growth or development.



**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Breastmilk is best for babies and provides ideal nutrition. Good maternal nutrition is important for preparation and maintenance of breastfeeding. Introducing partial bottle feeding could negatively affect breastfeeding and reversing a decision not to breastfeed is difficult. Professional advice should be followed on infant feeding. Infant formula should be prepared and used exactly as directed or it could pose a health hazard. The preparation requirements and cost of providing infant formula until 12 months of age should be considered before making a decision to formula feed.

Supported by:



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