



## Baby's first foods

Breastfeed your baby for up to two years of age or older. Human milk is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months. If you are not able to feed your baby human milk, talk to your health care provider about feeding your baby store-bought infant formula.

If your baby only drinks human milk, or human milk and some infant formula, they need a daily liquid vitamin D supplement of 400 IU. Human milk has some vitamin D but not enough to meet your baby's needs. Babies who only drink store-bought infant formula do not need a vitamin D supplement. Infant formulas already contain added vitamin D.

### When do I start to offer my baby solid foods?

At about 6 months of age your baby can start to eat solid foods. By this time, your baby needs more nutrients, especially iron. Your baby is also ready to learn to eat foods with different textures.

Your baby may be ready to start eating solid foods if they can:

- Hold their head up
- Sit-up and lean forward
- Watch for, open their mouth and close their lips around a spoon
- Pick up food and try to bring it to their mouth, and
- Let you know if they are full. For example turns head away

### How much food does my baby need?

Your baby decides if they are hungry and how much they will eat. As a parent or caregiver you decide what foods are offered.

Trust your baby to let you know when they are hungry and full. Offer food when your baby is hungry and stop when they show signs they are full.

Your baby is hungry when they:

- Open their mouth for food
- Lean forward eagerly
- Get upset if the food is taken away

Your baby is full when they:

- Close their mouth
- Turn their head or push food away
- Refuse to eat

By 12 months of age, aim to offer your baby solid foods at 3 family meals and 1 to 2 snack times each day based on their appetite.

### How do I start to offer my baby solid foods?

Start by giving your baby small amounts of food and gradually increase the amount based on their appetite.

- Sit down and eat with your baby. Choose a time when your baby is calm, interested and alert. Babies enjoy company and learn about eating by watching you and others eat
- Let your baby explore food with their hands. Learning to eat can be messy
- Solid foods can be offered before or after human milk. You and your baby can decide what works best. This may change over time
- As your baby eats more solid food, they will gradually begin to drink less human milk

### What types of food do I offer my baby?

Your baby can eat many of the same foods enjoyed by the rest of the family. Offer family foods made

with little or no added salt or sugar. Continue to offer human milk.

- Start with iron-rich foods and offer them at least 2 times each day. Examples include:
  - Well-cooked, finely minced or shredded meat, poultry and boneless fish, such as beef, pork, chicken, turkey, cod and salmon
  - Mashed cooked egg, lentils, beans and tofu
  - Iron-fortified infant cereal
  - Smooth peanut, tree nut and seed butters blended with an equal amount of warm water and stirred into iron-fortified infant cereal
- Along with iron-rich foods, offer other healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits, whole grains and milk products
- Offer sips of water in an open cup at meal or snack times
  - Avoid sugary drinks including 100% fruit juice

### **What types of textures do I offer my baby?**

Offer a variety of soft textures from 6 months such as lumpy, finely minced, ground and pureed. Your baby can eat soft foods and finger foods before they have teeth. Safe finger foods include:

- Finely minced, ground or mashed cooked meat, boneless fish, poultry, eggs and beans
- Small pieces of cooked vegetables and fruit, and soft ripe fruits without the skin
- Grated hard cheese
- Strips of toast and 'oat rings' cereal

Offer new textures as your baby gets older. Between about 8 to 12 months of age your baby will be able to bite and chew chopped foods and a greater variety of finger food such as:

- Small pieces of soft meat, fish, poultry, egg and beans
- Smooth peanut, tree nut and seed butters spread thinly on toast

- Small pieces of bannock, roti and tortilla
- Pasta, rice
- Grated raw vegetables

### **When can I introduce the common food allergens?**

At about 6 months of age you can offer safely prepared peanut, tree nut, sesame seed, egg, fish, wheat, soy and milk products to your baby. The risk of a food allergy developing to these foods is lowest when they are introduced at this time. Many of the common food allergens are also iron-rich and can be part of the first foods offered to your baby.

- You can start with the common food allergens your family eats
- Offer the common food allergens one at a time
- When your baby shows you they tolerate these foods, continue to offer them regularly. This may help prevent a food allergy from developing

### **When can I offer my baby cow milk?**

You can start offering small amounts of pasteurized whole cow milk (3.25% milk fat) in an open cup when your baby is:

- 9 to 12 months of age and
- Eating a variety of foods that are iron rich

Pasteurized whole goat milk can be offered if vitamin D and folic acid have been added to it. Check the product label.

Skim, 1% and 2% milk, and fortified soy beverage are low in fat and not recommended before 2 years of age. Dietary fat is important for the growth and development of babies and toddlers.

Do not give coconut, oat, rice or nut and seed beverages before 2 years of age. These drinks do not have enough fat, protein and other nutrients to meet your growing baby's needs.

### **How do I keep my baby safe while eating?**

- Babies and young children are at higher risk of choking. Always stay with your baby while they are eating or drinking and learn how to help if they choke

- Prepare foods for your baby in ways that reduce their risk of choking. For example, cut round foods like grapes, cherry tomatoes and large berries such as blueberries into smaller pieces. See [HealthLinkBC File #110b Prevent choking in babies and young children: For child care providers](#)
- Only give your baby pasteurized milk products. You can find this information on the label
- Never offer honey or food made with honey even if it's cooked or pasteurized to babies younger than 1 year. Honey could give your baby a food-borne illness called botulism
- Offer your baby fish that are lower in mercury. See [HealthLinkBC File #68m Food safety: Mercury in fish](#)

### For more information

If you have questions about feeding your baby, vitamin D supplements or food allergies, contact your health care provider. You can also call **8-1-1** to speak to a registered dietitian.

To learn more about feeding your baby, see:

- [Toddlers First Steps: A Best Chance Guide to Parenting Your 6 to 36 Month Old](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #69a Feeding your baby formula: Before you start](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #70 Breastfeeding](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #110b Prevent choking in babies and young children: For child care providers](#)

Some babies are at increased risk of developing a food allergy. To learn about reducing the risk, visit [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/reducing-baby-food-allergy-risk](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/reducing-baby-food-allergy-risk).