



## Baby's First Foods

Breastmilk is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months. Continue to offer breastmilk until your baby is 2 years old or older. If you are not able to feed your baby breastmilk, talk to your health care provider about feeding your baby a store-bought infant formula.

### Does my baby need Vitamin D?

If your baby is breastfed, or is breastfed and given some infant formula, they need a liquid vitamin D supplement of 400 IU every day. Breastmilk has some vitamin D but not enough to meet your baby needs.

Babies who are only fed store-bought infant formula do not need extra vitamin D.

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

At about 6 months 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 is ready to start eating solid foods if they:

- Can sit and hold their head up
- Can watch and open their mouth for the spoon
- Don't push food out of their mouth with their tongue

### How much food does my baby need?

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

Trust your baby to let you know when they are hungry and full.

Your baby is hungry when they:

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

Your baby is full when they:

- Shut their mouth
- Turn their head or push food away

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

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

Make your baby's first foods rich in iron.

- Solid foods can be offered before or after breastmilk. You and your baby will decide what works better. This may change over time
- As your baby eats more solid foods, they will gradually begin to drink less breastmilk
- Foods can be mixed and moistened with water
- Do not put cereal or other solid foods in a baby bottle
- Sit down and eat with your baby. Choose a time when your baby is happy, 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

### What do I feed 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.

Your baby can eat soft foods and finger foods before they have teeth.

- Soft foods include minced, mashed, ground, lumpy, pureed and tender-cooked foods
- Finger foods include small pieces of cooked vegetables, moist boneless fish, egg, pasta, soft fruits without the skin, grated cheese, strips of toast or roti and 'oat rings' cereal

### At 6 to 8 months:

- Continue to offer breastmilk.
- Offer iron-rich foods at least 2 times each day. Foods that are high in iron include:
  - Well-cooked, finely minced or shredded meat, poultry and fish, including beef, pork, chicken, turkey, cod and halibut
  - Mashed cooked egg, lentils, beans or cooked tofu; and
  - Iron-fortified infant cereal
- Offer other healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits, whole grains and milk products
- You can introduce peanut, tree nuts, milk products and sesame seed, as well as cooked egg, fish, wheat and soy.

The risk of a food allergy developing to these foods is lowest when they are introduced at about 6 months of age

- Offer peanut and tree nut butters blended into infant cereal or spread thinly on strips of toast
- Offer milk products such as yogurt and grated cheese
- When your baby shows you they tolerate these foods continue to offer them regularly. This may help prevent a food allergy from developing
- Offer sips of water in an open cup, but do not let your baby fill up on water
- Work towards feeding your baby solid foods at 2 to 3 meals and 1 to 2 snacks each day based on their appetite

### At 9 to 12 months:

- Continue to offer breastmilk
- Offer solid foods at up to 3 meals and 1 to 2 snacks each day based on their appetite. By 12 months, aim to have routine meals and snacks every 2 ½ to 3 hours
- Continue to offer foods high in iron 2 or more times every day
- Make sure the foods are soft and cut into small pieces
- Offer water in an open cup
- Your baby does not need juice. If you do give juice, offer no more than 125 mL (1/2 cup) per day of 100% fruit juice in an open cup
- Do not give juice or other sugary drinks in a bottle
- Do not let your baby sip on milk or juice between meals or snacks. This can lead to tooth decay

### When can I give 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
- Eating a variety of foods that are high in iron

Pasteurized whole goat milk may be offered if vitamin D and folic acid has been added to it.

Lower-fat milks (2%, 1% and skim) and fortified soy beverage are not recommended before 2 years of age due to their reduced fat content. Do not give coconut, rice or nut and seed beverages before 2 years of age. These drinks do not have enough nutrients to meet your growing baby's needs.

### How do I brush my baby's teeth?

Babies start to get teeth at about 6 months of age. New teeth are not very strong and need to be taken care of. Gently

clean your baby's teeth 2 times each day using a soft baby toothbrush or wet face cloth with a smear of fluoride toothpaste (the size of a grain of rice).

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

- Always stay with your baby while they are eating or drinking
- Babies and young children are at higher risk of choking. To prevent your baby from choking:
  - Offer cooked vegetables and fruit, like carrots and apples, before trying them raw and grated
  - Remove the pits from fruits
  - Slice and chop round and rubbery foods, such as grapes and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces
  - Make sure fish does not have bones
  - Do not offer foods that are choking hazards such as popcorn, whole peanuts, tree nuts, whole sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds, dried fruit like raisins, hard and gel candies, marshmallows, jellybeans or chunks of seed or nut butters, especially from a spoon. If hot dogs are offered, slice and chop them into small pieces
- Only give your baby pasteurized milk products, juices and soft cheeses (such as brie, camembert and feta). You can find this information on the label
- Never feed honey 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 or allergies, contact your health care provider. You can also call **8-1-1** to speak to a registered dietitian or registered nurse.

To learn more about feeding your baby, see:

- [HealthLinkBC File #19 Dental Care for Your Infant and Toddler](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #69a Feeding Your Baby Formula: Before You Start](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #70 Breastfeeding](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #110b Preventing Choking in Babies and Young Children: For Child Care Providers](#)

To learn about reducing risk of food allergy in your baby, visit [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/reducing-baby-food-allergy-risk](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/reducing-baby-food-allergy-risk).