

Setting healthy habits for life

Starting solid food is an important stage in your baby's life. The way you offer food to your baby is just as important as the foods you offer.

As a parent, or carer, your role is to keep mealtimes calm and pleasant, and to decide:

WHAT food is offered

WHEN food is offered

WHERE food is offered

It is your child's role to decide

WHETHER to eat food that is offered

HOW MUCH to eat

WHEN to start solid foods

Introduce solid foods when your baby is ready, at around six months of age and not before four months. Continue to breast or formula feed while introducing solid foods. Breast milk or infant formula is an important source of nutrition for your baby up to 12 months of age.

SIGNS your baby is ready

Your baby is ready for solids when they:

- can control their head and neck
- can sit with support
- show interest when others are eating
- reach for food
- open their mouth when food is offered.

If your baby's tongue pushes food out it may be a sign that they are not ready. Try again in a week or so.

HOW to offer first foods

Eating is a skill you teach your baby. In the early stages your baby is learning to explore new tastes and textures.

- choose a time of day when you and your baby are relaxed, like after a breast or formula feed
- make sure your baby is in a secure sitting position, e.g. in a highchair

- feed at your baby's pace. Stop when your baby has had enough (your baby turns away, pushes the spoon away or starts crying)
- sit down and eat with your baby
- offer food once a day. Start with one teaspoon of pureed food and increase gradually according to your baby's appetite
- **do not** add solids to a bottle
- progress to thicker, lumpier textures by 7–8 months of age.

WHAT first foods to offer

Foods can be offered in any order. Ensure iron-rich foods such as iron fortified baby cereal, meat, eggs or legumes are included early. Select foods from the five food groups that your family eats.

Five food group ideas to offer from around 6 months of age

Vegetables	soft cooked pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot, zucchini, broccoli or avocado
Fruit	soft cooked apple, pear, peach, ripe banana
Breads/cereals	baby cereal, porridge, wheat biscuit cereal, toast fingers
Meat and alternatives	pureed lamb, beef, veal, chicken, fish, legumes, egg, tofu, nut butter
Milk and dairy	full cream plain yoghurt, cheese, custard, cow's milk or soy alternative on cereal

See Australian Guide to Healthy Eating at eatforhealth.gov.au for more information on the five food groups.

HOW MUCH food to offer

The amount your baby eats will vary each day. Your baby may eat one teaspoon or up to 3–4 tablespoons or more at each mealtime.

Remember to let your baby decide how much to eat.

Drinks for your baby

Breast milk or infant formula should be your baby's main drink up to 12 months of age. Offer cooled, boiled tap water from a cup from six months of age. Fruit juice and sugar sweetened drinks are not recommended.

Baby explorers

Encourage your baby to hold a spoon, pick up food with their hands and feed themselves. It may be messy, but it is important to allow your baby to practice their eating skills in a supportive environment, free from stress and distractions.

Your baby may spit out, cough or gag on food the first few times. Try to keep calm, reassure your baby and offer more food when they are ready.

It can take many attempts before your baby happily accepts a new food, so keep trying.

Allergies

All babies, including those at high risk of allergy, should be given common allergy causing foods including peanut butter, cooked egg, fish, dairy and wheat products in the first year of life. If your baby doesn't react to food that may cause an allergic reaction, it should be regularly included in their diet. If you need more information about allergies, visit the [ASCIA website: www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au).

To prevent Botulism, do not feed honey to infants under 12 months of age.

Food Texture Timeline



Around 6 months

Start with smooth, soft, pureed or finely mashed textures.



Around 7-9 months

Move towards mashed, grated, minced and finely chopped foods. Offer soft finger foods that your baby can hold and chew such as rusks, soft vegetables and fruit.



Around 9-12 months

Offer soft chopped foods and finger foods.

Sample meal plans

These are a guide only. There is a wide variation in the number of breast milk or formula feeds babies have each day and family food choices.

7-9 months of age		
Early morning	Breast milk or formula feed	
Breakfast	Baby cereal with soft fruit	Water in a cup
Mid morning	Breast milk or formula feed	Playtime with finger food
Lunch	Minced meat, mashed potato, soft diced vegetables	Yoghurt Water in a cup
Mid afternoon	Breast milk or formula feed	
Dinner	Family meal, cooked soft and diced e.g. risotto/stir-fry/curry/meat and vegetables, diced fruit	Water in a cup
Evening before bed	Breast milk or formula feed	
9-12 months of age		
Early morning	Breast milk or formula feed	
Breakfast	Wheat biscuit cereal with cow's milk	Toast with spread Water in a cup
Mid morning	Diced fruit	Water in a cup
Lunch	Chicken and vegetable stew or curry	Water in a cup Breast milk or formula feed
Mid afternoon	Chopped tomato, cucumber	Cheese, crackers Water in a cup
Dinner	Family meal, cut into pieces	Fruit and yoghurt Water in a cup
Evening before bed	Breast milk or formula feed	

Where can I find out more information?

- TALK to your Maternal and Child Health (MaCH) nurse or General Practitioner (GP)
- MAKE AN APPOINTMENT with a Canberra Health Services (CHS) Community Dietitian by phoning (02) 5124 9977
- Go to health.act.gov.au/nutrition for more information and factsheets
- See Ellyn Satter's 'Division of Responsibility in Feeding': www.ellynsatterinstitute.org
- See ASCIA for up to date information on allergy prevention and management www.allergy.org.au

This factsheet is a summary of information provided in the **From Milk To More** booklet located on the website: health.act.gov.au/services-and-programs/nutrition/resources

Accessibility



If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81. If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.



For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility