

# Feeding Your Baby Solid Foods

A guide to feeding your baby from  
6 months to 1 year of age.



Adapted with permission from  
KFL&A Public Health



Most babies are ready for solid foods at 6 months of age. Some babies may be ready a few weeks before or a few weeks after their 6-month birthday.

This guide is for healthy babies, born full term (after 37 weeks).

If your baby was born preterm (before 37 weeks) or has a health condition, the guidelines may be different. Talk to your health care provider about the best way to feed your baby.





## Is your baby ready for solid foods?

My baby:	Yes	No
Is about 6 months old (or older).		
Can hold their head steady without any support.		
Can sit up in a highchair and lean forward without any support.		
Can open their mouth wide if offered food.		
Can turn their head away when they are full.		
Can pick up food and try to put it in their mouth.		

If you checked “yes” to all, your baby is ready for solid foods.

If you checked “no” to one or more, your baby is not ready for solid foods. Talk to your health care provider if your baby is not ready for solid foods, but you think they should be.

# Let your baby decide how much to eat

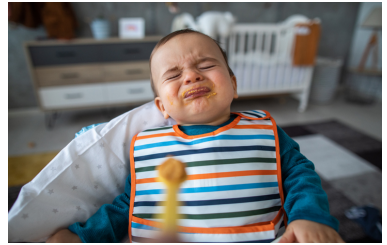
Every baby will eat different amounts of food from day to day.

Start by offering 1 to 2 tablespoons of food. Give your baby more if they show they are hungry. Stop feeding when they show they are full.



You'll know your baby is hungry when they:

- lean forward
- reach for food
- smack or suck their lips
- open their mouth when food is offered
- put their fist in their mouth



You'll know your baby is full when they:

- turn their head away
- close their mouth when food is offered
- cover their mouth with their hand
- fuss or cry

# Make mealtimes positive



## Eat together

Mealtimes are a chance to connect with your baby and to be a role model. Offer the same foods that the rest of the family is eating, just modify it so your baby can eat it safely.



## Schedule regular meals and snacks

Offer meals and snacks every 2 to 3 hours. Your baby should come to the table hungry, but not too hungry.



## Avoid games and tricks to get your baby to eat

It is normal for babies to accept a food one day and refuse it the next. Try it again another day.



## Limit distractions at meals and snacks

Distractions like toys, screens, and pets make it hard for your baby to focus on eating.

## Be patient



Babies will make a mess as they learn to feed themselves. Use a wide bib and keep a warm, wet washcloth close by to make clean-up easier.

# Introduce solid foods at around 6 months of age



From birth to 6 months of age, breastmilk is the only food your baby needs to grow and develop. At around 6 months of age, your baby's nutrition needs start to change. Solid foods help meet their changing needs.

Breastfeeding is still an important source of nutrition for your baby. While you introduce solid foods, continue breastfeeding on demand.

## Does your baby need vitamin D?



If your baby is fed breastmilk.

Yes. If your baby is getting any amount of breastmilk, give your baby a vitamin D supplement of 10  $\mu\text{g}$  (400 IU) every day. Keep giving vitamin D until your baby is 2 years of age.

If your baby is only fed formula.

No. You don't need to give a vitamin D supplement. Formula has vitamin D added into it.

# Start with foods high in iron

Offer solid foods that are high in iron first. Your baby was born with a supply of iron, but at around 6 months of age that supply is almost used up. They need to get it from food now.

## Foods that are high in iron



Lentils, peas, and beans



Tofu



Nut and seed butters



Meat and poultry



Wild game



Fish and shellfish



Egg



Iron-fortified infant cereals



From 6 to 12 months, offer foods high in iron two or more times every day.



Dark green vegetables like spinach and kale have more iron than other vegetables, but they are not the best source of iron for your baby.



Once your baby is eating foods high in iron 2 or more times every day, you can introduce other foods in any order.

# Offer other foods from Canada's Food Guide

## Vegetables and fruit

Fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables and fruit are all good choices. Choose frozen and canned vegetables and fruit without added sugar or salt.

Soft, ripe, peeled fruit:



Peach



Banana



Cantaloupe



Kiwi

Soft cooked vegetables:



Carrot



Broccoli



Cauliflower



Sweet potato

Grated raw vegetables and fruit:



Zucchini



Carrot



Apple



Beet



## Grains

Choose whole grain foods. Whole grain foods have more fibre, vitamins, and minerals than refined grain foods.



Whole grain pasta



Whole grain bread



Whole oats



Brown rice



Barley



Millet



Bulgur



Wild rice

## Milk products

Milk products such as yogurt and cheese can be offered at 6 months of age. Choose milk products with at least 3% milk fat.



Yogurt



Shredded, grated,  
or cubed cheese



Cottage cheese

At 2 years of age, switch to lower fat milk products.

When can your baby drink cow's milk?

-Wait until 9 to 12 months of age to introduce cow's milk to drink. Offer whole milk with 3.25% milk fat. Limit to 3 cups per day.



Plant-based milks are not recommended as the main source of milk for children under 2 years of age. These milks do not contain enough protein and fat to meet your baby's nutrition needs.



# Water

Breastmilk provides enough for your baby to drink, but at 6 months of age you can offer water in an open cup. Drinking water from an open cup lets your baby learn important drinking skills.

Offer drinks in an open cup instead of a bottle or “sippy cup”. Drinking from an open cup lowers the risk of cavities. It also keeps your baby from filling up on liquids, so they are still hungry for other foods.

If your baby drinks from a bottle, switch to an open cup by about 12 months and no later than 18 months of age.

Avoid sugary drinks. Babies do not need juice or other sugary drinks.

# Sugar, salt, and spices

Babies do not need sugar and salt added to their food. Read the label on packaged foods and choose foods with little to no added sugar or salt.

It is safe for your baby to eat foods flavoured with other spices and seasonings.

## Honey

Do not feed your baby honey before they are 12 months of age. This includes honey that has been pasteurized, cooked, or in baked goods. Honey may contain botulism bacteria which can make your baby sick.

Some yogurts and other foods are sweetened with honey. Read the ingredient list before offering packaged foods to your baby.

## Make food safety a priority

Babies and young children are at higher risk for food poisoning. Their immune systems are not fully developed to fight off infections.

Follow general food safety tips to keep you and your family safe. Visit [Canada.ca/FoodSafety](https://Canada.ca/FoodSafety) for more information.

Give your baby their own portion of food rather than sharing from your dish.

Throw out any uneaten food that has touched your baby's mouth or saliva.

Do not offer your baby these foods:

- under-cooked or raw meat, poultry, or seafood
- raw, runny, or soft-cooked eggs
- unpasteurized juice or ciders
- raw or unpasteurized milk products
- raw sprouts, like alfalfa, clover, radish, and mung bean

# Offer different textures and finger foods

At around 6 months of age, you can offer your baby a variety of soft textures and finger foods. Even if your baby doesn't have teeth, they can chew soft foods by munching up and down.

Textures that are safe for your baby to eat:



Puréed



Mashed



Finely minced



Ground



Lumpy



Small pieces



Offer a variety of textures by 9 months of age so that your baby learns to eat and enjoy lumpier textures. If your baby stays on puréed texture too long, they may have feeding difficulties as they get older.



# Finger foods

Finger foods help your baby learn to feed themselves. Let your baby practice even if it gets messy. The more chances your baby gets to try finger foods, the better they will be at eating them.

Finger foods that are safe for your baby to eat:

- Soft-cooked lentils, peas, and beans
- Finely minced, ground, or mashed meat, poultry, and wild game
- Boneless cooked fish
- Chopped hard-cooked egg
- Pieces of soft, ripe fruit
- Pieces of soft-cooked vegetables
- Soft-cooked pasta
- Bread crusts or toasts
- Grated cheese

# Prevent choking

Choking happens when your baby's airway is blocked. Hard foods, small and round foods, and smooth and sticky solid foods can block your baby's airway.

Your baby may cough or gag on food as they try different textures and finger foods. This is normal and part of learning how to eat solid foods.



- Always supervise your baby while they are eating.
- Make sure your baby is sitting upright. Car seats and rockers are not a safe place for your baby or child to eat.
- Know what to do if choking occurs. Take training in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



Never offer these foods to babies and children younger than 4 years of age:

- Big pieces of raw vegetables and hard fruits
- Small, round, or oval shaped food like whole grapes and small tomatoes
- Dried fruit, like raisins, whole nuts or seeds, nut butters spread thickly
- Fish, meat, or poultry with bones
- Hot dogs and sausages
- Hard candies, suckers, cough drops, or gum
- Popcorn or Marshmallows
- Snacks using toothpicks or skewers

To make foods safer for your baby:

- Grate or thinly slice raw vegetables or hard fruit.
- Cut small, round or oval shaped food into quarters.
- Spread nut or seed butters thinly on crackers or toast.
- Slice hot dogs and sausages lengthwise and cut into small pieces.

# Help prevent food allergy

Introduce common food allergens at around 6 months of age to help prevent food allergy. Common food allergens are those foods that people are more likely to be allergic to.

There are 10 common food allergens.

Introduce these foods as part of your baby's first foods.



Eggs



Shellfish



Milk



Soy



Wheat



Peanuts



Sesame



Tree Nuts



Fish



Mustard



## How to introduce common food allergens

- Offer one new common food allergen at a time.
- Choose a time when your baby will be awake for at least 2 hours in case they have an allergic reaction.
- Feed common food allergens on a spoon, rather than having your baby feed themselves. Food smeared on your baby's skin may cause skin irritation that can be mistaken for allergy.

### Possible signs of food allergy

- rash, hives (raised red, itchy bumps on the skin)
- watery eyes
- vomiting, diarrhea
- runny nose
- irritability, inconsolable crying
- swelling of face or tongue
- difficulty breathing

If your baby shows signs of food allergy: Stop offering that food and talk to your health care provider. If your baby is having difficulty breathing, call 9-1-1.

If your baby doesn't show signs of food allergy: Keep offering that food regularly, 2 to 3 times a week.

## Some babies are at higher risk of food allergy.

My baby has:	Yes	No
A food allergy I already know about		
Eczema		
A parent with a food allergy, eczema, asthma, or seasonal allergies		
A sibling with a food allergy, eczema, asthma, or seasonal allergies		

If you answered yes to any of the above, your baby may be at higher risk of food allergy. Talk with your health care provider about introducing common food allergens. Even if your baby is at high risk of food allergy, you should introduce common food allergens at around 6 months of age.

# Things to remember when introducing solids to your baby

## At around 6 months of age

- Introduce solid foods when your baby is ready.
- Continue breastfeeding on demand while you introduce solid foods.
- Start with foods that are high in iron.
- Choose full-fat milk products like cheese and yogurt.
- Introduce other foods once your baby is eating foods high in iron at least two times a day.
- Offer water and other drinks in an open cup.
- Introduce common food allergens.

## By 9 months of age

Offer a variety of textures and finger foods.

## Between 9 to 12 months of age

Introduce whole cow's milk to drink.



Do not offer foods that could cause your baby to choke.

Always supervise your baby when offering food or drink.

Let your baby decide how much to eat from the foods you offer.

Make mealtimes a positive experience for you and your baby.

Eat together as a family whenever possible, without distractions.

# Questions?

To connect with us, find us online or call us at:

Oxford County Know & Grow Line  
519-421-9901 x3473

Elgin County Know & Grow Line  
519-631-9900 x1400

[www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca)

To speak to a registered dietitian,  
contact Health811

Call 811  
<https://health811.ontario.ca/>