



Baby's First Menu

(Birth to Nine Months)

Birth to Six Months

Liquids

Breastfeeding

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months of life. Continue breastfeeding for up to 2 years and beyond.

Breastmilk is the best source of nutrients for your baby and can help boost the baby's immune system. It is the only food that your baby needs to grow and be healthy for the first six months. Breastfed babies need extra vitamin D daily. See our factsheet on "**Vitamin D and Infants**" for more information. You can find vitamin D drops at any drug store. Ask the pharmacist for help.

Baby Still Hungry?

It is normal for baby to want more milk at times when he/she is going through a growth spurt. Growth spurts are common at 3 weeks, 6 weeks and 6 months of age. For the first six months, handle hunger by feeding your baby more often, **not by** adding infant cereals or other new foods. Your baby's body isn't ready for solids until six months of age. Giving solids before six months will **not** make your baby sleep through the night.

At Six Months

Liquids

Breastmilk is still an important source of energy and nutrients for at least the first two years of life. It does not matter if breastmilk or food is given first at meals, you can decide based on convenience and your baby's cues.

After six months you can give your baby tap water or bottled water from a cup



if he/she seems thirsty. Offer it in an open cup instead of a sippy cup or bottle. Drinking from an open cup promotes mature drinking skills.

Breastmilk, vegetables and whole fruit contain all the nutrients that juice provides and many more. If you decide to give your baby juice, wait until after six months of age. Give your baby only unsweetened, 100% fruit juice and limit to 1/4 to 1/2 cup (2-4 oz) per day.

Starting Your Baby on Solid Food

At six months of age, your baby will need more nutrients (like iron) than breastmilk alone can provide.

Signs that a baby is ready for solids:

- Has good control of his/her head when sitting.
- Sits up in a high chair.
- Opens mouth wide when you offer food on a spoon.
- Closes lips over the spoon.
- Keeps food in mouth and swallows it instead of pushing it out.
- Turns face away if food is not wanted.

First Foods to Introduce

At six months, a baby's body needs extra iron, so offer iron-rich foods such as meats and meat alternatives as well as iron-fortified cereals first. See our "**Making Your Own Baby Food**" factsheet for more information. Between 6 to 12 months, offer your baby an iron-rich food two or more times a day.

Meats and Alternatives

Offer plain meats, fish, poultry (chicken and turkey), legumes (like beans, peas or lentils), well cooked eggs or soft tofu.

It is important to provide a variety of soft textures and finger foods from six months of age. Based on your child's readiness, you can offer either pureed, minced, ground or mashed cooked meat or meat alternatives even if he/she does not have teeth.

Do not give your baby deli meats such as ham, wieners, bologna, salami or sausages. These are high in fat and salt. Avoid fish high in mercury like fresh and/ or frozen tuna, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy, escolar and canned albacore (white) tuna. Low mercury fish like white



fish, canned light tuna and salmon are a good choice and a source of healthy omega-3 fats. See our “**Facts on Fish**” factsheet for more information.

Infant Cereal

Start with an iron-fortified, single-grain cereal such as rice. Gradually try other single-grain cereals, such as oats, barley, and wheat. Use mixed-grain cereals only after your baby has tried each of the single-grain cereals. Mix a little dry cereal with breastmilk to make it soupy and offer it on a teaspoon. You can thicken cereal later when your baby is used to this new way of eating. Always feed cereal from a spoon. **Never add cereal to a bottle.**

General Guidelines for Introducing Solids

- Start a new food at family meal times when baby is hungry and happy (usually in the morning or at lunch time).
- Toys or television will distract your baby from eating.
- Encourage self-feeding by offering safe finger foods in addition to lumpy, minced, mashed, pureed and ground textures. Safe finger foods include soft-cooked vegetables; finely minced,

ground or mashed cooked meat; grated cheese; soft, ripe fruit such as banana or avocado; and small pieces of toast or bread.

Feeding Tips

- To start, offer solid foods 1-3 times a day. As your baby grows, gradually increase the number of feedings to 1-3 times a day, plus 1-2 snacks a day.
- Offer a small amount (1-3 teaspoons) of food at first.
- If baby accepts the food, offer more, and if not, then try again the next day.
- Continue to breastfeed on demand throughout the day to meet your baby's needs.
- You decide what foods will be offered and at what time of day. Your baby will let you know if he/she wants to eat or not, and how much he/she wants.
- Continue feeding your baby as long as he/she wants to eat. You will know the meal is finished when your baby stops eating or loses interest. This might be before the bowl is empty. Never force your baby to eat.
- Babies may refuse to eat for a number of reasons. It doesn't mean they don't like the food. Maybe they aren't feeling well or maybe they are tired. Sometimes they lose interest in a certain food. Your baby may have to try a food several times before he/she likes it.
- Remember that babies have simple tastes. Baby food **does not** need added sugar, salt, butter or other extras.
- Continue to give breastfed babies a vitamin D supplement.

How to Feed

- Put a small amount of food on the tip of a small spoon.
- Hold the spoon so your baby can see it.
- Put some food on baby's lips.
- Put food in baby's mouth only if he/she opens it.
- Gradually give your baby more food.

Six to Nine Months

As your baby becomes better at eating gradually increase texture of foods from pureed or lumpy/mashed foods to small pieces. **Changing texture is important to help your baby learn to chew.**

Variety Adds Spice

After your baby has started eating iron rich foods (meats, meat alternatives and iron-fortified grains), add a variety of vegetables, fruit, grains, yogurt and cheese. Avoid serving cow's milk until nine to 12 months of age.

If you are concerned about food allergies, wait two days after introducing each of the foods below before you introduce a new food from the same list:

- whole eggs
- milk
- mustard
- peanuts
- seafood (including fish and shellfish)
- sesame
- soy
- tree nuts such as almonds, cashews, walnuts, pistachio nuts, hazelnuts and pecans

Signs of allergies:

- Rash anywhere on the body, vomiting, diarrhea, or breathing problems.
- Signs of food allergy may take up to three to four days to appear.
- Stop feeding the food if you think it is causing any of these symptoms. Talk to your doctor. Call 911 if your baby is having trouble breathing.

Where Can I Find More Information?

Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit

www.hnhu.org

Eat Right Ontario

www.eatrightontario.ca

Speak with a Registered Dietitian

for free by calling 1-877-510-5102

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