

When and How

Solid foods are any food or drink other than breastmilk or formula.

When

Your baby is ready for solid foods when they:

- are around 6 months old (4-6 months corrected age if preterm)
- can sit up in a chair with a back
- have good head control when sitting
- can open their mouth to accept foods

For the first 6 months, breastmilk (or formula) gives your baby the nutrition they need to grow and develop. All babies and children need a daily 400 IU vitamin D supplement.

Around 6 months, babies:

- need solid foods for more vitamins and minerals, like iron
- need their usual amount of breastmilk or formula
- are ready to learn to eat new textures and flavours

Some babies may be ready a little earlier than 6 months.

Starting solid foods too early? Your baby may:

- not get enough nutrition from breastmilk or formula
- not be ready to chew and swallow safely

Starting solid foods too late? Your baby may:

- not get enough vitamins and minerals
- be more likely to develop food allergies
- have trouble with new textures and flavours

How

How you and your baby interact around feeding and eating can help your baby listen to their body. You and your baby have separate roles:

- Your role is to decide what foods are offered, when to offer them, and where to offer them.
- Your baby's role is to decide if and how much they will eat from the foods offered. It's ok for your baby to eat more on some days and less on others.

Signs your baby is hungry:

- leans toward or reaches for food
- opens their mouth when you offer food
- gets excited when they see food



Signs your baby is full:

- turns their head away from the food
- closes their mouth when you offer food
- pushes the food away with their hands



Gagging is a natural reflex and is common for babies when starting solid foods. Gagging happens when food slips to the back of the tongue before a person is ready to swallow and is forced back into the mouth. It is not the same as choking. For more information search "gagging" at

<https://peas.albertahealthservices.ca>



How to

When choosing how to offer food to your baby, consider:

- Babies learn by getting messy! Babies may need to see, touch, smell, and taste a new food many times. Let your baby touch and explore new foods to help them get used to new textures and flavours.
- Include your baby at family meals. This helps them learn that mealtime is a time to come together and connect.
- Encourage your baby to feed themselves when they show interest. Help them when they need it.
- Some babies may need to start with pureed and mashed foods. Offer food on a little spoon and allow them to practice feeding themselves when ready.
- Modify or avoid foods that your baby can't safely chew or swallow.

Baby-led weaning is starting solid foods with whole pieces of food that a baby feeds themselves. It means not using purees or spoon-feeding. Keep in mind that:

- Many babies can't feed themselves or chew and swallow larger pieces of food when starting solid foods. They might need a bit more time to practice with other textures first.
- If you try baby-led weaning, make sure to include foods with iron that your baby can safely eat.

How much

There is no exact amount of food that is best for all babies. Your baby knows how much they need. Respect your baby's signs of hunger and fullness.

- Start by offering a few spoons or bites. Give your baby more food if they show you they're hungry. Stop feeding when they show you they're full.
- Your baby will eat different amounts from meal-to-meal and day-to-day.

How often

Offer solid food at the same time as breastmilk or formula feedings, or in between.

Age	Offer solids
At the start	1 time a day
6-8 months	2-3 times a day
9-11 months	3-4 times a day
1 year and older	3 meals and up to 2-3 snacks each day

Breastmilk or formula will continue to be your baby's main source of nutrition as they learn to eat solid foods. Around 9-12 months of age, as your baby eats more solid foods, you may notice they drink less breastmilk or formula.

For more information



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on [ahs.ca/811](#).
- Visit [ahs.ca/nutrition](#).
- Visit [www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca](#) and search "feeding your baby."

Making Food for Your Baby

Your baby doesn't need special foods. Feed your baby what you and your family eat. You might just need to change the texture to make it safe for your baby to chew and swallow.



Steps to make food for your baby

Fully cook

- eggs
- fish, shellfish
- meat, poultry
- hard foods until soft or tender

Remove

- tough skins, peels
- pits
- large seeds
- bones
- tendons

Add moisture

- breastmilk
- formula
- water
- milk or yogurt
- sauces

Add flavour

You can add herbs and spices or offer plain versions of foods. It's up to you!

To help your baby accept more foods as they get older, offer different flavours like:

<p>Bitter broccoli</p> 	<p>Sour yogurt</p> 	<p>Savory meat</p> 
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Limit sugar and salt

Choose and prepare foods with little to no added salt or sugar.

Babies naturally like sweet and salty tastes, so they don't need to learn to like them.

Too much sugar or salt over time is not good for your baby's health.

Change the texture to match your baby's ability to chew and swallow

It is usually easiest for babies to start with a pureed or mashed texture.



















Gradually add thicker, lumpier textures, and soft pieces of food.

<p>Blend Pureed</p> 	<p>Squash Mashed</p> 	<p>Grind/Shred Minced & moist</p> 	<p>Cut/Slice Soft/tender pieces</p> 
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Foods in different textures

Every baby is different and will add new textures at their own rate.

This list shows only a few food examples – offer your baby lots of different foods!

	Pureed or mashed	Minced & moist	Soft & tender pieces
Animal proteins meat fish, shellfish poultry eggs	 pureed fish	 flaked fish	 fish cakes
yogurt, cheese milk in baking or cooking	 plain yogurt	 cottage cheese	 shredded cheese
Plant-based proteins beans lentils nuts and seeds	 pureed beans or hummus	 minced lentils or beans with sauce	 lentil or bean stew
Vegetables fresh frozen canned	 pureed zucchini	 grated zucchini	 zucchini sticks
Fruits fresh frozen canned	 pureed peach cup	 diced peaches	 cut up peaches
Grain foods baby cereals with iron breads and pancakes cooked grains hot cereal pasta muffins soft crackers	 baby cereals with iron	 pancake strips made with baby cereal	 muffin made with baby cereal

By 9 months old, most babies will be able to eat pureed, mashed, minced & moist, and soft pieces of food. Babies will learn to pick up and feed themselves bite-sized, slices and strips of food.

Dissolve or melt in mouth

Dissolvable foods dissolve or melt with very little chewing. This texture can help babies build their chewing skills. These foods do not have much nutrition, so make sure to offer with other foods.

Grain foods

puffed cereal
cold cereal
rusks or wafers



puffed wheat



oat cereal o's



rusks

Mixed dishes and meal examples

Keep adding to the variety of foods, textures, and flavours you offer to your baby. If you can easily squish a food with a fork, your baby can safely mash the food with their gums.



Yogurt
Strawberries
Bulgar & bean salad
corn, pepper, onion
bulgur
black & green beans



Rice
Stir-fry
chicken
carrot, pepper,
onion



Chili
ground beef
beans
corn, onions, peppers
crushed tomatoes



Lentil dahl
red lentils
diced tomatoes
onion
herbs & spices

Foods in the “baby food” aisle

Foods marketed for babies are also options for your baby.

Most of these products are a pureed texture. Make sure to also offer other textures.

Serve store-bought foods in a bowl or on a spoon.

This helps your baby:

- practice eating from a spoon
- use their senses to see, smell and touch the food



Use caution

Sugar substitutes like aspartame, stevia, or sucralose, do not offer any nutrients. There is little information on their safety before 12 months.

Arsenic is a natural element found in some foods such as rice and rice products. Too much arsenic might be harmful to babies. To reduce the amount of arsenic your baby gets, rinse rice and cook rice with extra water. Drain extra cooking water before serving.

You can give your baby rice cereal and other rice products, but make sure it is not the only grain offered.

Do not give your baby

Foods that can contain bacteria that could make your baby sick. For more information see: [HealthyCanadians.gc.ca/foodsafety](https://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/foodsafety)

Honey in any form (pasteurized, unpasteurized, cooked, baked, or as an ingredient in other foods). Honey before 12 months can cause food poisoning (botulism).

Choking hazards like small and round foods such as whole grapes and whole nuts. Always watch your baby when they are eating.

For more information



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on ahs.ca/811.
- Visit ahs.ca/nutrition.
- Visit www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca and search “feeding your baby.”

First Foods

Around 6 months old, babies need solid foods for their brain and body to grow and develop. Offer all foods in a texture and size that matches your baby's ability to chew and swallow. Continue feeding the usual amount of breastmilk or formula.

Start with an iron rich food that is not a common food allergen

Include a food with iron each time you offer solid food.

Foods with Iron

These foods have the most iron (iron rich)



baby cereal with iron



**beef, deer,
moose, elk**



lentils and dried beans

Other foods with iron



chicken and turkey



peas



pork

After your baby has tried an iron rich food, start to offer common food allergens and other healthy foods. (next page)

How to introduce common food allergens

Babies who start to eat common food allergens, like peanut and egg, around 6 months old, may have fewer allergies to these foods.

- Try only 1 new common allergen per day. If your baby has an allergic reaction, it is easier to tell which food caused the reaction.
- Make sure your baby will be awake for 2 hours after feeding the allergen to watch for a possible allergic reaction.
- If there are no signs of allergy, keep offering the food often.
- Do not rub the food on your baby's skin to test for allergic reactions. The best way to prevent food allergies is to have your baby eat the food.

Common food allergens

Foods with iron



egg



peanut



sesame



shellfish and fish



soy



tree nuts



cow's milk products



wheat

Other healthy foods

Serve other healthy foods like vegetables and fruits, grain foods, and protein foods along with **foods with iron** and **common food allergens**.

Other than waiting 1 day between new common food allergens, there is no need to wait between new foods.

Ideas to offer common food allergens in a safe texture

Try these first and offer weekly.

Egg

- scrambled eggs
- egg bites
- quiche

Peanut

- peanut butter thinned with breastmilk, formula, or yogurt
- ground peanuts in cooking or baking

Try these next if they are foods your family eats. Offer every time your family eats them.

Cow's milk products

- plain yogurt
- cottage cheese
- milk in baking and cooking

Sesame

- hummus (made with tahini)
- sesame seeds in cooking or baking

Shellfish & Fish

- fish balls
- imitation crab
- salmon cakes

Soy

- tofu
- soy beverage in baking and cooking

Tree nuts*

- tree nut butter thinned with breastmilk or formula
- ground tree nuts in cooking or baking

Wheat

- wheat baby cereal
- flour in baking
- puffed wheat
- couscous

*Tree nuts include: almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts

Allergic reactions

The chance of a severe reaction in babies is low, especially the first time they eat the food. An allergic reaction usually happens within minutes but can be a few hours after eating the food.



Stop giving the food if your baby has any of these reactions:

- hives
- face swelling
- vomiting
- can't stop crying



Call 911 or go to a hospital if your baby has any of these severe reactions:

- trouble swallowing
- trouble breathing
- a limp body
- skin turning blue

Use allergycheck.ca to see if reaction is likely due to a food allergy.

Get advice from Health Link (call 811) or your doctor.

Drinks for Baby

Breastmilk is the only food and drink your baby needs for the first 6 months. You may decide to feed your baby infant formula (baby formula) only or in combination with breastmilk.



Breastmilk

birth to 2 years or longer



Baby formula

instead of or in combination with breastmilk

cow's milk baby formula

birth to 9-12 months

other baby formula, like soy or formulas for allergies

birth to 2 years or as advised by healthcare team



Milks and plant-based beverages

you can decide if you give your baby these milks along with breastmilk

3.25% milk

9-12 months (12 months for corrected age)
offer until 2 years

2%, 1%, skim milk

2 years and older

fortified plant-based beverages (like soy or others)

2 years and older

Water



6-12 months:

offer sips
does not replace breastmilk or formula

12 months and older:

offer when thirsty

Drinks to Avoid



Sugary drinks do not have the nutrition your baby needs and can cause cavities.

Examples:

- 100% fruit juice and fruit drinks
- iced tea
- lemonade
- pop (soda, soft drinks)

Drinks with sugar substitutes do not offer any nutrition and there is little information on their safety before 12 months.

Examples:

- acesulfame-potassium
- aspartame
- stevia
- sucralose

Drinks with caffeine do not have the nutrition your baby needs and might be unsafe for your baby.

Examples:

- coffee
- cola
- energy drinks
- tea (green and black)

For more information



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