

What to Feed Babies 6-12 Months

What to feed

Breast milk or formula: This is still the most important source of nourishment for your baby. If you choose to formula feed, it is recommended that you give your baby infant formula fortified with iron and zinc.

Water: Once your baby starts eating solid food, offer a total of 4 to 8 ounces per day of plain drinking water in a cup. This will help your baby get familiar with the taste and learn to like plain water.

Solid food: Start introducing mashed or pureed solid food sometime between 4 and 6 months when your baby is developmentally ready.

Is my baby ready for solids?

- Signs your baby is ready include sitting alone or with support, chewing and swallowing, grasping items, and bringing food to mouth.
- Your baby is not ready if he pushes solids out with his tongue when food is offered or gags when a spoon or food is placed in her mouth.



What solid food should I start with?

- Start with iron- and zinc-fortified baby cereals or pureed/mashed meats, particularly for babies who have only had breast milk. By 6 months breast milk does not provide enough of these nutrients.
- After iron- and zinc-fortified baby cereals or mashed meats, there is no particular order to follow for introducing solid food. But by the time your baby is 7 to 8 months old, introduce a variety of foods from all the food groups.
- Babies will more easily accept vegetables the earlier they are introduced.
- Introduce your baby to pureed or mashed food first, and gradually transition into lumpy food and soft finger foods between 6 and 8 months. Between 8 and 12 months, your baby can start eating minced, chopped food and harder finger foods.

How much solid food?

- Introduce solid food gradually. Start by offering 1 to 2 teaspoons of a pureed or mashed food and slowly increase the amount over time.
- Solid food will initially provide about one-third of total daily calories, increasing to over half of the total calories that babies needs by the time they are 1 year old.
- Between 6 and 11 months, babies eat every 2-3 hours or about 5 or 6 times during the day.

An example meal:

6 to 8 ounces of breast milk or iron-fortified formula

AND - Up to 4 tablespoons of infant cereal or protein foods (meat, eggs, lentils, peas, or beans such as black beans or chickpeas) OR dairy foods like cottage cheese (up to 4 ounces), cheese (up to 2 ounces), or yogurt (up to 8 ounces)

AND - Up to 2 tablespoons of vegetables, fruit, or a combination of both

An example smaller meal or snack:

2 to 4 ounces of breast milk or formula

AND - Up to ½ slice of whole grain bread OR up to 2 whole grain crackers OR up to 4 tablespoons iron-fortified infant cereal

AND - Up to 2 tablespoons of vegetables, fruit, or a combination of both

A healthy diet

- When introducing a new vegetable, mix it first with a familiar food like breast milk, formula, or cereal. Combining new food items with familiar ones with can help your baby accept and learn to like vegetables more readily.
- Introduce your baby to a large variety of vegetables and fruits prepared in different healthy ways and textures before he turns 1 year old.
- Feed your baby only healthy foods that provide plenty of vitamins, minerals, fiber, protein, and energy (like vegetables, fruits, whole grain products, eggs, fish, meat).

What to avoid

Milk: Drinking dairy milk before 12 months may result in intestinal bleeding and serious health issues for your baby.

Plant-based beverages: Soy, rice, almond, and other plant-based milk alternatives are not recommended for babies. If the baby appears to have a dairy allergy or intolerance, breastfeeding mothers can remove dairy products from their diets and/or your pediatrician will work with you to find a suitable infant formula option.

Honey: Babies younger than 12 months should not be given any foods that contain raw or cooked honey. Honey may cause botulism, a serious illness.

Fruit juices: Drinking juice can discourage your baby from eating other nutritious food. Offer mashed fruits instead; they are more nutritious!

Sugary drinks: Avoid soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks, energy drinks, and sweetened teas.

Added sugars and sodium (salt): When choosing food for your baby, check the food label and ingredient list. Choose foods with no or low amounts of added sugars and sodium. This will help your baby learn to like the natural flavors of food and help your child avoid eating too much salt and sugar later in life.

Supervise your child during feeding time and avoid offering foods that are a choking hazard such as nuts, whole grapes, popcorn, uncut hot dogs, and hard candies.