



For more advice about when and how to start your baby on solid food contact:

Child Health and Parenting Service:
See page 31 for contact details.

Starting solid food

At around 6 months babies need solid food. Keep breastfeeding or giving infant formula when solid food is introduced. It is still your baby's main food and drink.

Signs that your baby is ready for solid food

- they can hold their head up without support
- they can sit up with support, such as in a high chair
- they can control their tongue and do not stick it out when given food.

How to start your baby on solid food

- Start with a small amount of pureed food on a spoon after your baby has had their breastfeed or bottle feed.
- Feed your baby when you are having your meal.
- It is normal for babies to refuse solid food at first. They are learning how to eat.
- It is normal for babies to cough or gag a little on food. They may spit the food out or it may have to be taken out. Always stay with your baby when they are eating.

Do not wait too long after 6 months to try solid food because

- your baby needs extra food to grow healthy and strong
- your baby needs more iron than they can get from breast milk or formula
- some older babies may not be as willing to try new tastes and textures.

Babies do not need food before 4 months because

- breastfeeding or infant formula is all they need
- they cannot digest food very well.

Start with foods high in iron

- Your baby needs iron to grow healthy and strong.



Pureed red meat

- Meat, poultry and fish need to be well cooked and tender.
- Remove skin, bones and any gristle.
- Add liquid such as water or casserole juices without added salt. Or add vegetables such as cooked potato, pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot or zucchini.
- Blend in a food processor or with a stick blender.



Pureed baked beans, legumes or tofu

- Well cooked legumes, lentils and tofu. For example chickpeas, red lentils or kidney beans.
- Add liquid such as water or casserole juices without added salt. Or add vegetables such as cooked potato, pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot or zucchini.
- Blend in a food processor or with a stick blender.



Baby rice cereal

- Make cereal into a smooth paste with breast milk or infant formula.

Tips:

- If offering canned legumes like baked beans choose the no added salt variety.
- There is no need to add sugar or salt to your baby's food.
- If your baby is only eating small amounts of pureed food, freeze food in ice cube trays so you can defrost a small amount at a time.

Foods not to give babies

Some foods can cause food poisoning and can make babies and young children sick.

Do not give:

- honey to children under the age of 12 months
- uncooked eggs (raw or runny)
- raw milk. By law milk sold in Australia should be pasteurised.

Food allergies

There is still a lot we do not know about allergies. These tips might help:

- If possible breastfeed your baby and keep breastfeeding when they start solid food. Continue to breastfeed until they are at least 12 months old.
- Do not delay starting solid food. Offer solid food at around 6 months of age, but not before 4 months.
- When starting solid food there are no foods that should be avoided. Foods can be introduced in any order, although iron rich foods should be offered first.

Foods that commonly cause reactions are foods containing nuts (including peanuts), eggs, dairy, soy, wheat, fish and shellfish. Signs that a baby might be having a reaction include swelling of the face, vomiting, watery poos, skin rashes or wheezing.

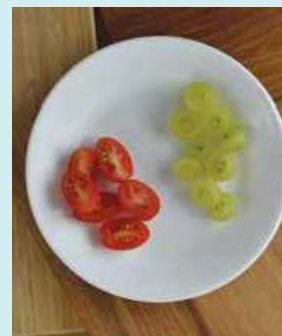
If you think your baby has a food allergy or there is a history of food allergy in your family and you want more information before starting solids contact the Child Health and Parenting Service or your GP. See page 31 for contact details.

Safe eating

- Children under the age of 3 years are at risk of choking because they are still learning to eat, chew and swallow.
- Always stay with your child while they are eating.
- Ask your child to sit down to eat.
- Make foods safer to eat by cooking, chopping, mashing and grating:



Grate, cook or mash hard fruit and vegetables.



Chop small round fruit and vegetables in half.



Give nut paste rather than whole nuts.

The next step, add different foods from each of the five food groups

- The five food groups are grain (cereal) foods, vegetables, fruit, meat and meat alternatives and dairy foods. See page 30.
- Foods can be introduced in any order.
- Gradually vary the texture from pureed to mashed, then minced and chopped foods as your baby gets older.
- Changing the texture will help your baby learn how to bite and chew. They do not need teeth to be able to do this.

Offer finger foods

- Finger foods can be given as soon as your baby can sit up by themselves.
- Cut food into small pieces so they are easy for your baby to pick up.

Tip:

Finger foods are great to pack and take for baby to eat when you are away from home.

Grain (cereal) foods

Choose mostly wholegrain or high fibre varieties.

Vegetables

Cook hard vegetables until soft and puree or mash. Grate or mash fresh vegetables.

Fruit

Choose soft fresh fruit and cook hard fruit until soft.

Meat and alternatives

Choose lean meats and trim off excess fat and gristle.

Dairy foods

Choose full cream dairy foods for children under 2 years old.

Puree



Baby cereal



Pureed sweet potato



Pureed apple



Blended tuna casserole



Plain yoghurt

Minced and Mashed



Porridge



Mashed avocado



Mashed banana



Scrambled eggs

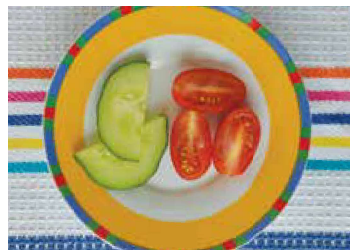


Fruit and yoghurt

Finger Foods



Toast fingers



Cherry tomatoes and cucumber slices



Watermelon slices



Meat balls



Cheese sticks



For more advice about your babies eating, daily routine or how they are growing contact:

Child Health and Parenting Service
See page 31 for contact details.

Eating is a time for learning and exploring

- It is normal for a baby to refuse food at first. Do not worry, just try again another time.
- It is okay if your baby does not eat much when they first start solids. They are still getting most of their nutrition from breast milk or infant formula.
- Most babies need to be offered a food many times before they learn to eat it. Let your baby touch, feel, smell and taste the food. This can be messy but helps your baby learn about food and eating.
- Eating at the same time as your baby will help them learn from you.
- Do not add solid food to your baby's bottle as this will not help them learn to eat.

Tip:

Put a plastic mat or newspaper under your child's chair if you are worried about the mess.

As your baby grows

- You may find they are eating more solid food and need less milk feeds.
- Food can be offered at family meal times and they may breastfeed or have infant formula in between.
- This will be different for each baby and every family.

How much food does your baby need

- Every baby is different.
- Babies are born knowing when they are hungry and when they are full.
- How much your baby eats will change from day to day.
- Offer a breastfeed, infant formula or solid food at regular times over the day.
- When offering food, trust that your baby will eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full.
- When babies are not interested in eating they will:
 - turn their head away from the food
 - push the spoon away from their mouth
 - lean back in their chair.



All babies will learn to eat food of different textures at different ages. By around 12 months most babies will be able to manage foods eaten by the rest of the family.

Family meals

You do not have to make a special meal for your baby or child. You can just make small changes to the family meal:

- Blend, mash, chop or cut the food into smaller pieces.
- Do not use salt or sugar in your cooking.
- Add stronger spices and herbs such as chilli to the family meal after you have removed some for your baby or child.

Tip:

Sometimes family life can get busy. Plan meals ahead of time, cook extra and freeze for another time.

For advice about your child's eating, their behaviour or how they are growing contact:

Child Health and Parenting Service
See page 31 for contact details.

Children and eating

Childhood is when healthy food habits are started

- Children are born knowing when they are hungry or full.
- Children have small stomachs and need to be offered regular meals and snacks over the day.
- It is good to offer children food about 5 times over the day as part of your daily routine. For example offer your child food from the 5 food groups at breakfast, lunch and dinner and for a snack in between each meal. See page 26 for food ideas.
- Let them decide how much they will eat.
- Forcing or bribing a child to eat can make them forget how it feels to be hungry or full.
- It is normal for some children to eat more or less than others.
- Eating is an important social time. Eat together as a family as often as you can. Turn off the TV and electronic devices and put toys away so there is less distraction.
- Try not to label foods as good or bad. Talk about food from the 5 food groups as everyday food (see page 30). Explain that sometimes foods are not for everyday.

Tip:

Let older children help with meals. Let them set up the table or wash the vegetables.

Sometimes foods

Foods like chocolate, lollies, biscuits, cakes, pastries, deep fried foods and sweet drinks are not needed. They can fill children up and leave little room for everyday foods. It is okay to say no to sometimes foods.

It is normal for children to be fussy with food. This is part of growing up.

Children may

- eat more some days than others
- eat some foods sometimes and refuse them at other times
- take a long time to try new foods.

Help your child to try new foods by

- Offering a new food as part of the family meal.
- Letting them touch or smell the new food.
- Talking about the new food, such as how it grows, where it comes from, what it tastes like.
- Eating the food yourself.
- Try not to fuss if your child will not eat a food. You can always try another time.

Remember some children need to see, smell and taste a new food many times before they will eat it. Be patient and praise your child if they do try a new food.

If your child does not want the meal offered

- Keep calm and take it away.
- Re-offer the food at the next meal or as a snack.
- Set your child up for success by offering an everyday food that you know they enjoy as part of a meal. This way you know your child will be more likely to eat something.

If you are concerned your child is eating too much

- Remember how much children eat will vary from day to day.
- Offer regular meals and mid-meal snacks. Offer a variety of foods from the 5 food groups.
- Try not to use food or drinks to keep children quiet or entertained.
- Try not to reward children with food. Reward them by giving praise, reading a story or playing a game instead.



Drinks for children

12 months and beyond

- Keep breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby are happy to.
- Infant formula is not needed after 12 months. You can give your baby full-cream cow's milk.
- From around 12 months of age your child does not need more than 500 mL or 2 cups of milk a day.
- Too much milk can stop children from eating other everyday foods because it fills them up.
- When your child is 2 years old, they can have low fat or reduced-fat milk (not skim or fat free milk).
- Sweet drinks such as juice, cordial and soft drink are high in sugar and are not good for teeth.

Make water the main drink

- Tap water is the best everyday drink for children and adults.
- Give water whenever your child asks for a drink.
- Have water on the table at mealtimes.
- Show that you enjoy drinking water by drinking it too.
- Take a water bottle when you go out.

Tip:

Fun items such as straws, drink bottles or decorated cups can make drinking water fun.

A guide of what and how much to offer

An example of a days food for a 1-2 year old



Breakfast

- Breakfast biscuit with full-cream milk
- Fresh fruit



Snack

- Fresh fruit
- Small cup of full-cream milk



Lunch

- Vegetable omelette
- Toast



Snack

- Sliced vegetables
- Cheese



Dinner

- Pasta and bolognese sauce
- Cooked vegetables
- Fresh fruit and yoghurt

An example of a days food for a 2-3 year old



Breakfast

- Wholegrain cereal flakes with milk



Snack

- Crumpet
- Small cup of milk



Lunch

- Egg and lettuce sandwich
- Fresh fruit



Snack

- Vegetable sticks and hommus dip



Dinner

- Homemade hamburger
- Oven-baked potatoes and pumpkin
- Salad vegetables
- Fresh fruit

An example of a days food for a 4-8 year old



Breakfast

- Baked beans
- Wholegrain toast



Snack

- Pikelets
- Fresh fruit



Lunch

- Tuna and salad wrap
- Fresh fruit



Snack

- Cup of reduced-fat milk
- Wholegrain crackers and cheese



Dinner

- Roast chicken
- Mashed potato
- Cooked vegetables
- Canned fruit and custard

Food ideas

Breakfast

Breakfast gives children energy for the day. Eating foods from the 5 food groups helps them grow healthy and strong.

- Tub of yoghurt or a glass of milk and a piece of fresh fruit.
- Porridge with canned or fresh fruit.
- Toasted English muffin or crumpets with cheese.
- Scrambled eggs on toast with tomato.
- Homemade fruit smoothie – blend soft fruit and milk.
- Baked beans.
- Vegetable omelette.
- Wholegrain cereal biscuit with milk and canned or fresh fruit.
- Wholegrain cereal flakes with milk and canned or fresh fruit.
- Fruit bread.



Fresh fruit and yoghurt



Toasted English muffin with cheese



Porridge with canned or fresh fruit



Fruit bread

Lunch at home

- Toasted sandwich with:
 - baked beans and cheese
 - tuna, cheese and tomato
 - ham, cheese and pineapple
 - creamed corn, cheese and asparagus.
- Mini pizza made with an English muffin and topped with cheese, pineapple and ham.
- Left-overs like spaghetti bolognese, vegetable stir fry or fried rice.
- Sweet corn scrambled eggs made with eggs, creamed corn and grated cheese.

Lunch away from home

- Cheese and cucumber sandwich.
- Tuna, corn, lettuce and mayonnaise wrap.
- Roast meat, lettuce, carrot and cheese sandwich.
- Slices of cold roast meat, cheese, cherry tomatoes and cucumber slices.
- Vegetable and egg slice.
- Pasta salad with corn, peas and capsicum.

Keep lunches safe

Use a frozen ice brick and insulated lunch box.



Roast meat, lettuce, carrot and cheese sandwich



English muffin topped with cheese, pineapple and ham



Vegetable and egg slice



Slices of cold roast meat, cheese, cherry tomatoes and cucumber slices

Food ideas continued

Snacks

Food offered between meals should be from the 5 food groups and not just something extra or a 'treat'.

Children have small stomachs and may need about 5 small meals a day to grow healthy and strong.

Offer snacks made from the 5 food groups every day.

- Fresh fruit - apple, pear, grapes, strawberries or mandarin pieces.
- Canned fruit and custard.
- Dip and vegetable sticks - cucumber, carrot, celery or snow peas.
- Rice cakes with avocado and tomato.
- Bread and cheese.
- Grilled bread fingers with cheese and pineapple.
- Pikelets topped with berries and yoghurt.
- Celery sticks filled with peanut butter and sultanas*.
- Cup of milk.
- Homemade banana smoothie - blend banana and milk.
- Baked beans.
- Cooked pasta spirals and grated cheese.
- Boiled egg.
- Air popped popcorn*.
- Creamed rice and fruit.

*Not for under 3 years.

Children under the age of 3 years are at risk of choking. Make foods safer to eat by cooking, chopping, mashing and grating.

Tip:

Fruit and vegetables in season are usually cheaper.



Celery sticks filled with peanut butter and sultanas*



Pikelets topped with berries and yoghurt



Cup of milk



Cooked pasta spirals and grated cheese

Family meals

- Meals such as savoury mince, meat and vegetable stew or soup made in the slow cooker. Try adding lentils or legumes like kidney beans or chickpeas for a change.
- Shepherd's pie made with savoury mince, topped with mashed potato. Try sweet potato for a change.
- Roast chicken, corn on the cob and salad vegetables.
- Oven-baked or grilled fish with homemade baked potatoes, carrot, corn and peas.
- Omelette with grated or diced vegetables such as zucchini, mushroom, onion, tomato or corn.
- Homemade chicken nuggets made with chicken breast cut into pieces and coated in egg and crushed cornflakes or bread crumbs.
- Jacket potato topped with baked beans and grated cheese.
- Tuna pasta made with tomato pasta sauce, canned tuna and vegetables such as grated zucchini, carrot, mushrooms or capsicum.
- Pizza made with a store bought base and topped with tomato paste, pineapple, ham, mushrooms, tomato, capsicum and cheese.
- Easy Mexican made with pan fried chicken, vegetables such as capsicum, corn, tomato, spices, cheese and natural yoghurt and served in a tortilla wrap.
- Stir fried tofu, lean meat or chicken with vegetables and served with rice or noodles.

Tips:

It is okay to use frozen or canned vegetables.

Freeze some meals to have when life gets busy.

It is okay to use store-bought items like tomato pasta sauce, pizza bases or roast chicken to save time.



Jacket potato topped with baked beans



Easy Mexican tortilla wrap



Homemade chicken nuggets



Stir fried chicken with vegetables and rice