



Tuckatalk

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WOMEN, YOUTH & CHILDREN COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS

Baby's first food: Setting habits for life

Starting solid food is an important stage in your baby's life. Try to keep feeding enjoyable for your baby.

WHEN to start solid foods

Introduce solid foods when your baby is ready, at around 6 months, and not before 4 months. Continue to breast or formula feed while introducing solid foods.

SIGNS your baby is ready

Your baby is ready for solids when he or she has head and neck control, can sit with support, shows interest when others are eating, reaches for food, has a reduced tongue thrust and opens his or her mouth when food is offered.

HOW to offer first foods

Eating is a skill you teach your baby. In the early stages your baby is learning to explore new tastes and textures.

- Choose a time of day when you and your baby are relaxed, after a breast or formula feed.
- Sit down and eat with your baby.
- Offer food once a day. Start with around one teaspoon of pureed food and increase gradually according to your baby's appetite. **DO NOT** add solids to a bottle.
- Feed at your baby's pace. Stop when your baby has had enough e.g. turns away, pushes spoon away, starts crying.
- Progress to thicker, lumpier textures by 7–8 months.

WHAT first foods to offer

Foods can be offered in any order. However ensure iron-rich foods such as iron fortified baby cereal, meat, eggs or legumes are included early. Select food from the five food groups that your family eats.

Food Texture Timeline



Around 6 months

- Start with smooth, soft, pureed or finely mashed textures.



Around 7–8 months

- Move towards mashed, grated, minced and finely chopped foods.
- Offer soft finger foods that your baby can hold and chew such as rusks, soft vegetables and fruit.



Around 9–12 months

- Offer soft chopped foods and finger foods.

Helping your child with eating

- The way you offer food to your baby is just as important as what foods you offer.
- **Parents/carers** are responsible for **what, when, and where** food is offered, and for keeping meal times calm and pleasant.
- Your **baby** is responsible for deciding **whether** to eat and **how much** to eat.
- Avoid pressuring your baby to eat, stay calm, and focus on positive eating behaviours.

Some early food ideas (around 6 months)

Grains: baby cereal, porridge, wheat biscuit cereal, toast fingers.

Vegetables: soft cooked pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot, zucchini, broccoli, avocado.

Fruit: soft cooked apple, pear, peach, ripe banana.

Meat and Alternatives: pureed lamb, beef, veal, chicken, fish, legumes, egg, tofu, nut butter.

Dairy: plain yoghurt, cheese, custard, cow's milk on cereal or soy alternatives.

Baby explorers

Encourage your baby to hold a spoon, pick up food with their hands and feed themselves. It may be messy, but it is important to allow your baby to practise their eating skills in a supportive environment, free from stress and distractions.

Your baby may spit out, cough or gag on food the first few times. Try to keep calm, reassure your baby and offer more food when they are ready.

It can take many attempts before your baby accepts a new food happily, so keep trying.

Allergies

All babies, including those at high risk of allergy should be given potentially allergenic solid foods including peanut butter, cooked egg, fish, dairy and wheat products in the first year of life. If your baby tolerates an allergenic food it should be regularly included in their diet.

Honey should NOT be given to babies under 12 months.

HOW MUCH food to offer

The amount your baby eats will vary each day. Your baby may eat one teaspoon or up to 3–4 tablespoons at each mealtime. REMEMBER to let your baby decide how much to eat.

Drinks for your baby

Until 12 months of age breast milk or infant formula should be your baby's main drink. Offer cooled, boiled water from a cup from six months. Fruit juice and sugar sweetened drinks should be avoided.

	7-9 months*	9-12 months*
Early morning	• Breast milk or formula	• Breast milk or formula
Breakfast	• Baby cereal with soft fruit • Water from a cup	• Wheat biscuit cereal with cow's milk • Toast with spread • Water
Mid morning	• Breast milk or formula	• Diced fruit • Water
Lunch	• Minced meat, mashed potato, diced vegetables • Yoghurt • Water from a cup	• Chicken and vegetable casserole • Water • Breast milk or formula
Mid afternoon	• Breast milk or formula	• Chopped tomato, cucumber and cheese • Water
Dinner	• Diced vegetables and diced fruit • Water from a cup	• Sandwich cut into pieces • Fruit and yoghurt • Water
Evening	• Breast milk or formula	• Breast milk or formula

*These are sample meal plans only; there is wide variation in the number of milk feeds babies have.

Where can I find out more information?

- TALK** to your Maternal and Child Health (MACH) Nurse or General Practitioner (GP)
- MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** with an ACT Health Community Dietitian by phoning **6207 9977**
- LOOK** at Ellyn Satter website www.ellynsatter.com
- SEE ASCIA** for up-to-date information on allergy prevention and management www.allergy.org.au
- GO TO** www.health.act.gov.au/nutrition for more information and factsheets.



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