



From Milk *to more...*

Introducing foods to your baby

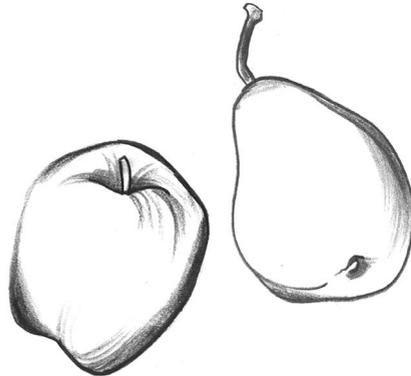
Contents



Introduction	4
How do I know my baby is ready for solids?	5
The First Step (<i>around 6 months</i>)	7
The Next Step (<i>7 – 9 months</i>)	13
Food safety for babies	19
Fluids for Babies	24
How do I know that my baby is eating enough?	27
Moving towards family foods	29
Helping your child with eating	34
Commonly asked Questions and Answers	36
Further Information	45
Bibliography	47
Index	48

Introduction

Starting to eat solid food is an important milestone in your baby's life. This booklet will provide you with practical, easy to follow information about introducing solid food to your baby and then progressing towards family meals. The information presented in this booklet represents best practice in the field at the time of printing. The booklet has only been written as a guide. There are no hard and fast rules. Babies are individuals and develop at different rates, so observe your baby and let him or her guide you. Consult your Maternal and Child Health (MACH) nurse, General Practitioner (GP) or dietitian if you would like individual advice about your baby's nutrition.



How do I know my baby is ready for solids?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding (i.e. no solid foods) for the first 6 months of life. **Around 6 months**, your baby will start to show signs he or she is ready for solids.

Check the list below to see if your baby is ready for solids.

Your baby:

- has enough head and neck control to support and turn their head
- is aware of their hands and fingers so can participate in feeding
- can sit with support
- opens their mouth when food approaches
- shows interest when others are eating, reaches for food and watches food from plate to mouth
- has a reduced tongue thrust reflex. The tongue does not push food out as it enters the mouth. Instead food stays inside the mouth and moves to the back to be swallowed.

Most health authorities recommend that you do not start solids until your baby is at least 4 months of age.

Introducing solids before 4 months of age is NOT recommended because:

- breast milk is the best food for your baby and can supply all of your baby's nutritional needs. If your baby is not receiving breast milk, infant formula is the only suitable option for babies under 12 months.
- swallowing is unlikely to be co-ordinated enough to manage semi-solid food
- the digestive system may not be mature enough to cope with foods other than breast milk or infant formula
- solid food makes extra work for your baby's kidneys
- studies have found an increased risk of allergies when solids are introduced before 4 months.



The First Step...

around 6 months

In the early stages, solids provide your baby with an opportunity to explore new flavours and textures. Focus on keeping the experience pleasurable for your baby.

When is a good time of the day to start?

- Select a time that suits you and your baby
- Choose a time of the day when your baby is quiet and relaxed
- You may like to choose a time when a supportive person is with you
- Solid food should initially be offered after a milk feed or at a separate time to a milk feed.

How do I give my baby solids?

- Initially offer your baby solid foods once a day
- Start with 1 teaspoon and increase gradually according to your baby's appetite
- Use a small spoon with smooth edges.

Do NOT add solids to a bottle. Babies need to learn that there is a difference between eating and drinking.

- Ensure your baby is in a secure sitting position (e.g. on your lap or strapped into a highchair)
- The semi-solid food needs to be warm, slightly runny, smooth in texture and mild in taste
- Introduce a new food each day or at a rate that suits your baby
- If your baby rejects a food or does not seem to like it, continue to offer it regularly as it can take 10–15 tastes before a baby will learn to like some foods
- It is important that you respect your baby's efforts to communicate and stop feeding when they let you know they have had enough. Your baby might turn away from the spoon, push the spoon away or close their mouth when they see a spoon of food coming
- When your baby is managing around 2–4 tablespoons of food, you can offer food at another occasion and then a third so they are eating three times a day.

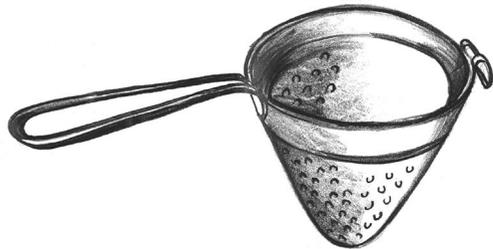
If your baby has a reaction e.g. rash, vomiting or diarrhoea, stop feeding the food and discuss with your GP, MACH nurse or dietitian.

What solid foods do I offer first?

- Foods can be introduced in any order
- Iron fortified rice cereal is an excellent first solid food because it is high in iron
- Pureed or finely mashed cooked fruits, vegetables or meat may be offered next
- Offer foods separately so that your baby can enjoy the individual flavour of each food
- Throw out any uneaten food left on your baby's plate. Do not reheat and offer at another time.

The importance of iron for babies

Iron is important for your baby's normal growth and development and helps to maintain a healthy immune system. By 6 months of age your baby's iron stores may be getting low. Iron fortified rice cereal and pureed meat and chicken are good sources of iron. If you are vegetarian introduce pureed or mashed legumes e.g. chickpeas, cannellini beans, cooked tofu or lentils. The iron from plant foods is better absorbed if foods containing vitamin C (e.g. citrus fruits, berries, tomatoes or green leafy vegetables) are eaten at the same meal.



How do I prepare the food and what do I need?

- No special equipment is required. A blender is useful but not essential
- Wash your hands well before preparing or handling food for your baby
- Feeding utensils should be washed in hot soapy water and rinsed. It is not necessary to sterilise them
- Rice cereal may be mixed with breast milk, formula or cooled, boiled water to a smooth, slightly runny consistency
- Adding sugar, salt or fat when cooking fruit or vegetables is not recommended
- Fruit and vegetables may be steamed, microwaved or boiled in a small amount of water
- Cooked fruit and vegetables can be pushed through a sieve, mashed with a fork or blended using an electric blender
- Prepare small amounts of food, refrigerate and use within 48 hours, or prepare larger amounts and freeze in ice cube trays. When frozen, remove from the tray and store covered in the freezer for up to one month. Thaw individual cubes as needed
- Heat the food using a microwave oven or in a saucepan on the stove.

IMPORTANT! Always stir the food well and then check the temperature of the food before giving it to your baby.





Baby's first foods

BABY'S AGE	Around 6 months (not before 4 months)
CONSISTENCY	Smooth, soft, pureed, finely mashed
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breast milk or infant formula
Cereal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iron fortified rice cereal (recommended first food) • iron fortified oat cereal
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vegetables that can be cooked and made into a fine, smooth puree or mash • e.g. pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot, zucchini, potato
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soft cooked apple, pear, peach, apricot • ripe banana • ripe avocado
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pureed lamb, beef, veal, chicken, fish, legumes, egg, tofu, nut butters
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plain yoghurt, cheese, custard, cow's milk on cereal

A good rule of thumb is to select food familiar to your culture. Include these foods and make them smooth, soft, pureed or finely mashed.

Helpful tips for pureeing

Fruit or Vegetables



1. Wash and peel fruit or vegetables and slice or dice
2. Place in a saucepan with a small amount of water or in a microwave dish
3. Simmer gently with lid on or cook in microwave until very tender
4. Allow to cool slightly
5. Mash with a fork or blend to a soft, smooth consistency
6. Add extra boiled water if needed to achieve the right consistency.

Meat & Chicken



1. Trim all visible fat and gristle from a tender cut of beef, lamb or chicken e.g. rump or fillet steak, lamb cutlet or chicken breast or use lean minced meat
2. Steam, dry fry or grill meat until cooked, taking care not to overcook
3. Slice thinly or dice
4. Add meat to a blender with 1 tablespoon of boiled water
5. Puree meat until soft, adding more boiled water if needed.

The Next Step...

7-9 months

Progressing to thicker, lumpier textures

When your baby is eating rice cereal, a variety of pureed fruit and vegetables and pureed meat, chicken, fish or legumes, it is important to progress to thicker, lumpier textures.

When introducing lumpier textures, your baby may spit the food out or even gag on the food the first few times. This gagging is a normal part of learning to eat and usually frightens parents more than the baby. Try not to react too much. Be reassuring, give your baby time to recover and offer more food when they are ready. If they do not want to eat any more at that meal, stop feeding and try at another time.

Around 7–9 months babies are able to make definite chewing movements even though some may have no teeth. They are able to hold a spoon, pick up food in their hands and feed themselves. Even though it may be messy, it is very important that you allow your baby to practise these skills, as this will help your baby learn to eat.

HINT: Place newspaper or a plastic mat under the high chair to catch spills.

Delaying the introduction of lumpy, textured foods that require chewing may lead to feeding and speech problems when your baby is older.

Progression to thicker lumpier textures

BABY'S AGE	Around 7 months	8 – 9 months
CONSISTENCY	Soft, mashed Thicker, coarser texture	Minced, grated, diced Finger foods
Milk and Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breast milk or formula • yoghurt (full fat) • custard • white sauce • grated cheese • cottage cheese (try mixed with fruit or avocado) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breast milk or formula • yoghurt (full fat) • custard • white sauce • grated cheese • cottage cheese (try mixed with fruit or avocado)
Breads and Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rice cereal • mixed baby cereal • rolled oats • semolina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mixed baby cereal • rolled oats • sago • bite size bread/ toast pieces (white or wholemeal) • rusks • pasta, macaroni • rice

Progression to thicker lumpier textures (cont.)

BABY'S AGE	Around 7 months	8 – 9 months
CONSISTENCY	Soft, mashed Thicker, coarser texture	Minced, grated, diced Finger foods
Fruit	<p>Mash with a fork to a thick, lumpy texture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mashed stewed fruit, e.g. apple, pear, peach, apricot, prunes • mashed ripe banana • mashed avocado 	<p>Offer ripe or lightly cooked fruit, diced or grated, so baby has to chew and can begin to self feed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grated apple • ripe banana pieces • diced soft fruit e.g. peach, mango, kiwi, pear • diced avocado
Vegetables	<p>Mash cooked vegetables with a fork to a thick, lumpy texture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g. potato, pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot, zucchini, broccoli 	<p>Offer diced, cooked vegetables so baby has to chew and can begin to self feed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g. potato, sweet potato, carrot, pumpkin, zucchini

Progression to thicker lumpier textures (cont.)

BABY'S AGE	Around 7 months	8 – 9 months
CONSISTENCY	Soft, mashed Thicker, coarser texture	Minced, grated, diced Finger foods
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pureed beef, lamb, pork • pureed poultry • pureed liver • mashed tofu • mashed well cooked legumes e.g. kidney beans, soybeans, lentils • well mashed hardboiled egg yolk, if tolerated introduce egg white* 	<p>Offer moist, lumpy textures so baby has to chew</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minced beef, lamb, pork • finely chopped poultry • homemade liver pâté • flaked fish or canned tuna** • diced tofu • egg dishes e.g. scrambled egg, omelette • mashed well cooked legumes e.g. kidney beans, soybeans, lentils
Fats and Oils	It is not necessary to add butter or margarine to food prepared for baby	Once you are offering foods like bread and toast, you may like to spread a little margarine or butter
Salt and Sugar	It is not necessary to add salt or sugar to food prepared for baby	Avoid adding salt or sugar to food prepared for baby

**See page 43 for information on mercury and fish

Sample meal plan

By 8–9 months your baby will be enjoying a range of foods and having a few solid meals a day. Some babies may be having more than four breast or formula feeds at this stage. Their daily routine may look something like this.

Early morning	Breastfeed or formula
Breakfast	Mixed baby cereal with breast milk or formula Toast, lightly spread with butter or margarine Pureed fruit Water from a cup
Mid morning	Breastfeed or formula
Lunch	Minced meat, mashed potato, diced vegetables Fruit and yoghurt Water from a cup
Mid afternoon	Breastfeed or formula
Dinner	Diced vegetables, diced fruit and custard Water from a cup
Before sleep	Breastfeed or formula

Recipe

Tuna Macaroni

Serves 4



2 tablespoons margarine
2 tablespoons plain flour
2 cups milk
1½ cups cooked macaroni (¾ cup dry)
90–100g drained canned tuna (no added salt)
½ cup grated cheese
2 teaspoons chopped fresh parsley

1. Melt margarine in a small saucepan, stir in flour and cook over medium heat for 1 minute.
2. Gradually add milk, stirring until mixture boils and thickens.
3. Combine milk mixture with macaroni, tuna, cheese and parsley.
4. Serve with vegetables.

Extra servings may be frozen for up to 1 month.

Food safety for babies

The following information has been sourced from *Preventing Choking on Food* by The Department of Health, Government of South Australia (August 2011).

Why are young children at risk of choking on food?



Young children under 4 years of age are particularly at risk of choking because their back teeth (which are used to chew and grind lumps of food into small pieces) have not completely developed. The food they swallow is therefore in larger pieces. If it 'goes down the wrong way' it is more likely to block their airway causing them to choke. To make eating safer for young children:



- do not give any foods that can break off into hard pieces
- do not give popcorn, nuts (whole or crushed), hard lollies, corn chips or other similar foods
- avoid raw carrot, celery sticks and apple pieces. These foods should be grated, cooked or mashed
- remove tough skins from fruit e.g. grapes and blueberries and chop into quarters or halves
- meat, chicken, sausages and frankfurts should be cut into small pieces. Tough skins on frankfurts and other sausages should be removed
- check fish carefully for bones and remove if present.

Also

- Always stay with young children and supervise them while they eat
- Always sit children down to eat
- Encourage children to eat slowly and chew well
- Never force young children to eat
- Encourage children to feed themselves.

First aid training courses include information on what to do if a child is choking. Contact St John Ambulance Australia or Australian Red Cross for more information.

Safe Finger Foods

Some babies are very independent and do not like to be fed with a spoon. If your baby is like this, try finger foods. Finger foods are foods that hold together and are easily picked up. Choose softer foods to start with and move onto firmer textures as your baby grows. Offer healthier choices more often rather than sweet biscuits, cake etc.



Safe Finger Foods

Fruit



- Banana rings or chunks
- Orange, mandarin (remove white membrane and seeds)
- Canned fruit e.g. diced mixed fruit, peach slices
- Soft stewed fruit e.g. apple, pear
- Large sticks of rockmelon or watermelon (remove seeds)
- Grapes (remove skins and seeds and cut into quarters)
- Stone fruit e.g. plums, nectarines (remove tough skin and stone)
- Strawberries, kiwifruit



Cereals/Breads/Starchy foods

- Strips of bread or toast (spreads such as cream cheese will make bread softer and a little easier to manage)
- Pasta shapes e.g. spirals provide easy grip for little hands
- Pikelets
- Thick mashed potato (try rolling into balls)
- Soft, cooked cubes of potato
- Rusks
- Savoury biscuits with spreads



Vegetables

- Soft cooked vegetable cubes or pieces, e.g. pumpkin, potato, zucchini, broccoli
- Soft cooked vegetable fingers e.g. carrot, baked sweet potato, green beans

Meat and Alternatives



- Pieces of soft cooked meats e.g. from casseroles
- Strips of chicken, tender meat
- Canned fish e.g. tuna, salmon (mix with mashed potato)
- Lamb chop or chicken bone. Remove any gristle but leave a little meat on to 'chew' off
- Cubes of tofu
- Meat or fish. Finely chop, mix with mashed potato and shape into balls or patties
- Boiled or scrambled egg or omelette cut into strips
- Baked beans or other cooked beans

Dairy

- Grated cheese

More Safety Tips

Microwave ovens

- Care must be taken to ensure food is heated evenly
- If using a microwave to reheat frozen or refrigerated food, check that the food is piping hot (to reduce levels of harmful bacteria that may be present) and then allow to cool down to a safe temperature for your baby
- Always stir after heating and **check the temperature** of the food before giving it to your baby.

Freezing

- Freezing foods you have cooked for your baby is a good way of saving time
- Defrost foods in the microwave or in a saucepan on the stove top only if you intend to use them immediately, otherwise thawing food in the fridge is recommended
- Do not leave frozen food to thaw on the bench at room temperature because that will increase the risk of food poisoning.

Fluids for Babies

Breast milk or infant formula

- Breast milk or infant formula is the most important source of nutrition for the first 9 months
- By 9 months a baby is generally eating three meals a day and the frequency of milk feeds is beginning to decline
- Breast milk or infant formula should remain the main milk source until your baby is 12 months old
- Breastfeeding can continue for as long as desired.

Cows' milk, goats' milk

- Cow's milk or goat's milk are not suitable as the main milk source until after your baby is 12 months old as they have been associated with iron deficiency in babies
- Pasteurised milk products e.g. yoghurts, custards and cheeses may be offered from 6 months of age
- Infants who are allergic to cow's milk protein are also likely to be allergic to goat's milk
- Reduced or low fat milk is not recommended for children under 2 years of age as the fat in whole milk is an important source of energy and fat soluble vitamins
- Milk offered to babies or toddlers should never be diluted.

Non-dairy 'milks'

- If your baby is not tolerating cow's milk formula you may be advised by your health professional to try a special formula
- Regular soy drinks are not suitable as a main drink for babies under 12 months of age. They do not contain the right balance of protein, fat and vitamins (See page 38)
- Rice or oat drinks are low in energy and protein and are not suitable for babies or young children.
- If your child has allergies to dairy and soy, consult with a dietitian to ensure your baby's nutritional needs are being met.

Water

Cooled boiled water can be offered to your baby soon after introducing solids. Tap water contains fluoride which helps reduce the incidence of dental caries. Rain water, bottled water (check the label) and some types of filtered water do not contain fluoride. If using these, discuss with your dental professional.

Water may be given from a cup with a teat or spout or from an open cup. Your baby may take very small amounts initially as the taste and feel of water is very different to breast milk. Keep offering small quantities to your baby as continued exposure usually leads to acceptance.

The National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia recommends that water given to infants under 12 months of age is boiled.

Fruit juice

Fruit juice is not recommended for babies under 12 months of age. After 12 months, small amounts of diluted 100% fruit juice can be offered. Use an open cup, not a bottle.

Too much fruit juice can:

- Reduce appetite for more nutritious solid foods
- Cause diarrhoea in toddlers
- Cause dental caries

Unsuitable fluids for babies

- Tea and coffee
- Soft drinks / fizzy drinks
- Cordial or sweet tasting syrups
- Flavoured milks
- Alcohol



Drinking cups

Babies can drink from a cup with help from 6 months of age. There is a range of drinking cups on the market with lids that have a teat, spout or straw system. If using these, progress from teat to spout to straw as your baby gets older. Offering some drinks from an open cup will help your baby learn to drink from cup. Babies quickly learn to hold the cup and drink by themselves.

How do I know that my baby is eating enough?

Babies are very responsive to their own needs and feelings of hunger and fullness. While breastfeeding or bottle feeding, you have been relying on your baby to let you know how much he or she needs. This doesn't change when solids are introduced.

Initially offer small amounts and increase as tolerated. It is best to let your baby decide how much to eat at any meal.

When babies have had enough to eat they let you know by:

- turning their head away
- losing interest in what they are eating
- pushing the food away
- closing their mouth
- starting to cry and showing signs of distress.

It is important to remember that your baby's appetite can vary from meal to meal and day to day.

Never force or pressure your baby to eat.

Feed at your baby's pace and stop when he or she lets you know they have had enough.

If your baby is developing and growing well, they are likely to be eating enough.

'Division of Responsibility in Feeding'

As a parent you are responsible for:

- **what** food is offered
- **when** it is offered
- **where** it is offered
- **keeping** meal times calm and pleasant.

Your child is responsible for:

- **how much** they eat
- **whether** they eat.

See www.ellynsatter.com for more information.

If you are concerned about your baby's growth or food intake see your MACH nurse or dietitian.

Moving towards family foods

9-12 months

Independence and self feeding

By 9–12 months of age, solids are becoming more important than milk. The amount of breast milk or formula your baby receives will decrease and the amount and frequency of solid food will increase.

By 9–12 months your baby should be eating a range of foods varying in textures and flavours. Your baby is becoming more independent and will want to be more involved in their own feeding. They will be able to pick up food between their finger and thumb, use a spoon more easily and drink from a closed or open cup with help.

Encourage this development. Initially this may mean one spoon for you and one for your baby. Also offer finger foods (see page 21 for ideas). Let your baby use their hands to help feed themselves. This is often a very messy process, but it is an important part of your baby's development.

Spreads

Once your baby is eating bread, toast and crackers you may want to add a spread. Many of the spreads available offer important nutrients, while others offer very little. The following table may help you choose the most suitable spreads for your baby.

Spreads

SPREADS – Recommended

Margarine and butter

- an important source of fat
- spread thinly

Cream cheese, ricotta, cottage cheese

- minor source of protein and calcium

Yeast spreads

- good source of B vitamins
- spread very thinly as high in salt

Fruit spread

- high in sugar
- spread thinly

Hommus (chickpea spread)

- good source of protein and iron
- can be high in salt if not homemade
- great as a spread or a dip
- may contain tahini - see below

Tahini (sesame paste)

- contains some calcium
- introduce cautiously as it can cause a severe allergic reaction*

Smooth peanut butter

- good source of protein and iron
- introduce cautiously as it can cause a severe allergic reaction*

Spreads – **not** recommended

Honey

- high in sugar
- do not give to infants under 12 months because of a risk of botulism (a type of food poisoning)

Chocolate and nut spread

- high in fat and sugar
- not suitable as a spread for babies

* See page 41–42 for more information about food allergy

Progression towards family foods

BABY'S AGE	9 – 12 months
CONSISTENCY	Variety of different textures – mashed, diced, grated. Encourage self feeding by offering finger foods (Page 21-22)
Milk and Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breast milk & infant formula continue as the main milk drink • cow's milk on cereal • full fat dairy foods e.g. custard, yoghurt, cheese
Breads and Cereals	<p>Some regular cereals are suitable for babies. It is best to avoid those high in sugar or based on bran</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less processed breakfast cereals e.g. rolled oats or wheat biscuits • toast pieces/fingers with scrape of margarine or butter • variety of breads– wholemeal and wholegrain bite size sandwiches with moist fillings e.g. cheese, cream cheese, egg, tuna and mayonnaise, yeast spread • rusks, cruskits • rice - white and brown • pasta e.g. macaroni, noodles, spaghetti • couscous
Fruit	<p>Continue to offer a variety of cooked and ripe fresh fruit. Offer fruit that has a stronger flavour and firmer texture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • orange or mandarin segments (membrane removed), pineapple pieces, seedless grapes cut in quarters with skins removed, rockmelon, watermelon. Remove all seeds.

Progression towards family foods (cont.)

BABY'S AGE	9 – 12 months
CONSISTENCY	Variety of different textures – mashed, diced, grated. Encourage self feeding by offering finger foods
Vegetables	<p>Continue to offer a variety of diced and mashed vegetables. Remember to offer vegetables that have a stronger flavour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, celery, capsicum, tomato, cucumber, mushrooms
Meat and Alternatives	<p>Continue to offer meat, poultry and fish that is tender, moist and easy to chew</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinly sliced roast meats cut into bite size pieces • diced tender cuts of meat • flaked fish* • canned fish* e.g. salmon and tuna • family casseroles lightly seasoned with spices and herbs • eggs - boiled, poached or scrambled • diced tofu • bean and lentil casseroles • canned baked beans (try reduced salt varieties)

* Refer to information on page 43 about fish and mercury

Continue to supervise your child when eating to reduce choking risk.

Sample meal plan

9–12 months

You will probably find that you are now preparing fewer separate meals. Your baby can manage many of the family meals if presented in an appropriate manner e.g. chicken and vegetable casserole cut into bite size pieces or spaghetti bolognese using small pasta shapes.

By 9–12 months of age, most babies will be eating 3 meals a day and the number of snacks will depend on their sleep routine. The following meal plan is a sample only. The important point to note is the increase in solid food and decrease in the number of milk feeds. However, there is a wide variation in the number of milk feeds babies have at this age. **From 9 months offer food before a breast or formula feed.**

Early morning	Breastfeed or infant formula
Breakfast	Wheat biscuit cereal with cow's milk Toast and spread Water
Mid morning	Diced fruit Water
Lunch	Chicken and vegetable casserole with rice Fruit and custard Breastfeed or infant formula
Mid afternoon	Toast fingers and spread Water
Dinner	Sandwich cut into manageable pieces Fruit and yoghurt
Before sleep	Breastfeed or infant formula

Helping your child with eating

Your child's attitude to food and eating will be shaped by their eating experiences at this age. Understanding where your role begins and ends will help your child develop a healthy attitude to food.

It is your role to:

- provide healthy foods for your child
- choose the type of foods offered to your child
- provide food regularly (every 2–3 hours)
- make meal and snack times happy and relaxed.

It is your child's role to:

- choose how much to eat from the foods you offer.

Your child's appetite will vary from meal to meal. Children often go through phases of not wanting to eat particular foods or eating only a small amount. This is usually related to growth phases and will pass.

Most children are born with an ability to know how much they need to eat to grow. If you force them to eat, or restrict the amount of food available to them, they will lose this ability.

Helping your child with eating

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer foods that your child has refused at other meals. Exposure to foods and repeated tasting will help them learn to accept new foods• Provide support and company for your child at eating times. Be there, be interested, talk to your child and be relaxed. Children are more likely to try and accept new foods when they have pleasant adult company• Turn off the television at meal times• Encourage your child to feed him or herself• Offer finger foods that can be picked up. Be relaxed about the mess• Schedule meals so your child is not too tired or too hungry as they will eat poorly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer lots of different foods when the first choice is refused. You decide what's on the menu. This should include some choice e.g. main dish, vegetables, fruit and yoghurt. If your child is not interested in any of these foods, let them down from the high chair• Overwhelm or entertain your child during meal times• Use foods as a reward or bribe. It makes the reward foods even more 'special'• Pressure or trick your child into eating. If your child has indicated they are not hungry, allow them to stop eating.

Commonly asked Questions and Answers

When and how do I introduce eggs?

Eggs may be introduced from around 6 months. Begin by offering a small amount of well cooked egg yolk. Gradually increase the amount until your baby is eating nearly a whole egg yolk. Once you know the yolk is tolerated, offer small amounts of cooked whole egg and increase gradually.

My 12 month old baby won't swallow meat. He chews and chews and then spits it out. What can I do?

Many babies find chewing meat difficult. Others keep chewing until the meat becomes too dry to swallow. Try to serve moist meat dishes such as casseroles, stews, mince dishes or thinly sliced, slowly cooked roast meat. Also try alternatives such as baked beans, tofu, nutloaf and lentil burgers, chicken and fish. Tiredness may also lead to slow chewing. Try serving meat at lunch. Reheating the family meal from the night before is fine. Do not worry if your child does not swallow the meat. He or she is still learning to chew and getting used to the taste of meat which is an important step.

Should I use a follow-on formula now my baby is 6 months?

There is no need to change from your usual formula when your child is 6 months of age. A standard infant formula can be used until your baby is 12 months old. Your health professional can advise if your child would benefit from a follow on formula.

Should I use a toddler milk once my baby turns one?

Toddler milks are not necessary if your child is eating a varied diet and growing well.

When can I introduce cow's milk as a drink?

Cow's milk is not as nutritionally balanced for babies as breast milk or formula. It is higher in sodium (salt) which is not good for your baby's kidneys, and low in iron which is essential for your baby's development. Breast milk or formula should continue as the major source of milk until 12 months of age. Cow's milk should not be given as the main drink to infants under 12 months. Small amounts of cow's milk e.g. in custards, yoghurt, cheese and on cereals, may be introduced from 6 months. If there is a family history of allergies, or your baby shows signs of allergy read the guidelines on page 41.

When can I introduce low fat dairy products or low fat soy products?

Children under the age of 2 years need the fat and vitamins supplied in regular dairy and soy products to provide them with the energy they need for normal growth and development. Low fat milk or low fat soy drinks are not suitable before the age of 2 years and skimmed milk is not recommended before 5 years of age.

Are soy formula and soy milk suitable for my baby?

Babies under 12 months should be given breast milk or infant formula. If it is necessary to use a formula, the usual choice is a cow's milk formula. If your baby is under 6 months and does not tolerate a cow milk formula, an extensively hydrolysed formula is recommended. If your baby is over 6 months and does not tolerate a cow's milk formula then a soy formula may be tried.

When your child is 12 months of age, and eating a good variety of foods you can change over to a regular soy drink. Choose a full fat soy drink with added calcium and vitamin B12.

If your child is following a vegan diet, or is not eating a wide range of foods including meat, it may be better to continue with a soy formula until 2 years of age as the soy formula will provide extra iron and other nutrients.

Rice, oat and almond milks are low in protein and energy and are not appropriate alternatives to breast milk or formula. Care should be taken if used with older children.

How do commercial baby foods rate?

Home prepared foods provide your child with the opportunity to experience and enjoy the taste of family foods.

Commercially prepared baby foods are nutritious. The ingredients used are of high quality and have been hygienically prepared. If used regularly, your baby may become used to the taste and textures of commercial baby food and refuse to eat home prepared meals.

Commercially prepared baby foods are best used as a convenience food when travelling or on outings rather than an everyday choice. Remember to choose a variety of flavours and a texture appropriate to your child's stage of development.

Is it okay to give my baby squeezy pouches?

Squeezy pouches are a convenient option when out and about. It is important to offer these to your baby with a spoon. Avoid letting your baby suck on the squeezy pouch as it may contribute to dental caries.

My baby is constipated. What can I do?

It is important to establish if your baby really is constipated. Constipation refers to bowel movements that are infrequent or hard to pass. Talk to your GP or MACH nurse if you are not sure. Constipation may occur with the introduction of solids and a decrease in the intake of fluid (breast milk or formula). When introducing solids, it is important to introduce cooled, boiled water.

An adequate intake of dietary fibre helps to prevent constipation. Offer fruit, vegetables, legumes and wholemeal breads and cereals to increase fibre intake. Do not use added bran. If you continue to have concerns, discuss this with your GP, MACH nurse or dietitian.

Are spicy foods harmful?

Once tolerating a range of foods, most babies can tolerate mild herbs and spices. Foods made with hot spices, such as chillies, may cause discomfort.

When do I need to clean my baby's teeth?

It is best to start cleaning your baby's teeth as soon as the first tooth comes through. Wipe gently with a clean piece of gauze or a face washer. Let your baby play with a soft child's toothbrush in the bath to become familiar with it. As your child gets more teeth, use the brush to gently brush all tooth surfaces. A low fluoride toothpaste for children less than 6 years of age should only be introduced when your child can spit out, usually between 18 months and 2 years of age.

How long should my baby drink from a bottle?

Introduce your baby to a cup after 6 months of age. Bottles can be phased out around 12 months of age. The problem with continuing to drink from a bottle is that toddlers will often drink large quantities of milk (over 500mls per day) which can reduce their intake of other foods. A very high milk intake is associated with iron deficiency anaemia.

If a child is allowed to suck on a bottle while asleep it can result in tooth decay. If you are having difficulty stopping the bottle, talk to your MACH nurse.

What can I do to prevent my child from developing food allergies?

There is no proven way to prevent food allergies. However you may be able to reduce the risk of your baby developing a food allergy.

When your baby is ready, at around six months, but not before four months, start to introduce a variety of solid foods, starting with iron rich foods, while continuing to breastfeed.

Introduce nutritious foods that your family usually eats. All babies should be given commonly allergenic solids foods including smooth peanut butter, cooked egg, dairy and wheat products in their first year. This includes babies at high risk of allergy. **There is evidence that introduction of commonly allergenic foods should not be delayed.**

You may like to introduce one food at a time early in the day. This will help you identify a problem food if an allergic reaction occurs. The foods most commonly associated with food allergy are cow's milk (and cow's milk products e.g. yoghurt, custard,cheese), egg, peanut, other nuts, fish, soy and wheat.

If a food is tolerated, continue to give it as part of a varied diet.

Hydrolysed formulas (usually labelled 'HA' or Hypoallergenic) are not recommended for prevention of allergic disease. If you are unable to breastfeed, a standard cow's milk based infant formula should be given as the first choice. There is no evidence that a soy or goat's milk based formula helps reduce the risk of food allergy.

What if my baby reacts to a food?

Some infants will develop food allergies. If your baby has an allergic reaction to any food, that food should be stopped and you should seek advice from a doctor with experience in food allergy.

Signs your baby may be having an allergic reaction include difficulty breathing, facial swelling, rash, vomiting or diarrhoea.

For current information and guidelines on food allergies see the Allergy Prevention fact sheets produced by the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) **www.allergy.org.au/patients/allergy-prevention**

I have heard some types of fish are high in mercury. What fish can my child have?

Fish is a nutritious food containing protein, omega 3 fats, iodine and a range of other vitamins and minerals. It is important to know that some fish contain higher levels of mercury and should be limited in your child's diet.

These fish are:

- Shark (Flake)
- Billfish (Swordfish/Broadbill and Marlin)
- Orange Roughy (Deep Sea Perch)
- Catfish

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand advise that children up to 6 years of age can safely eat:

- 75 grams of Orange Roughy or Catfish and no other fish that week OR
- 75 grams of Shark or Billfish (e.g. swordfish) and no other fish that fortnight

OR

- 225 grams per week of any other type of fish or seafood (including tinned tuna, salmon and fish fingers).

For more information about fish and mercury visit
www.foodstandards.gov.au

When should I see a dietitian?

If you have any concerns about your baby's feeding, speak with your MACH nurse.

If you still have any concerns you can see a dietitian. You do not need a referral for this service and it is free of charge. To make an appointment in the ACT, call Community Health Intake on 02 6207 9977. In other states and territories phone your Department of Health.

Further Information

For more information about feeding your baby, you may like to check out the library or book shop, or look on the following websites. Consult your MACH nurse, GP or dietitian if you would like individual advice about your baby's nutrition.

Nutrition

Satter, E. 1987 How to get your kid to eat...but not too much. Bull Publishing.

An excellent guide to help your child develop a healthy relationship with food and their body.

Cookbooks

Remember that by 12 months of age, your baby will be mostly eating family foods that have been cut into manageable pieces. Special recipes are not needed.

However if you are looking for inspiration there are a number of books available.

Authors to look for include:

- Annabel Karmel (English)
- Robin Barker (Australian)
- The Australian Women's Weekly.

Alternatively type 'baby food recipes' or similar into your internet search engine.

Websites

www.raisingchildren.net.au

A website supported by the Australian Government with information on a range of parenting topics including nutrition.

www.parentlink.act.gov.au

An ACT Government site with information on many aspects of parenting.

www.eatforhealth.gov.au

An Australian Government website with information on the amount and kinds of foods to eat for health and wellbeing.

www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Official website of the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

www.health.act.gov.au

An ACT Government, Health Directorate site with information on community-based health services.

www.foodstandards.gov.au

Official website of Food Standards Australia New Zealand providing information on food safety.

www.foodsafety.asn.au

The Food Safety Information Council of Australia website with downloadable fact sheets such as *Protecting tiny tummies – Preparing food for an infant or young child*.

www.allergy.org.au

The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and allergy (ASCIA) website for up to date information on food allergy.

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This booklet is based on current best practice in this field. Information has been collected from a literature review on infant feeding and the experiences of health professionals.

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Index

Allergy 41

Bottle or Cup 26, 41

Commercial baby food 39

Choking 19

Constipation 39, 40

Division of responsibility 28

Eggs 11, 16, 36

Finger foods 20, 21, 22

Fish and mercury 43

Follow on formula 37

Food Allergy 41, 42

Iron 9

Soy drinks/milks 25, 38

Spreads 29, 30

Sugar 16

Teeth 40

Water 25

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CANBERRA HOSPITAL
AND HEALTH SERVICES



Where can I find out **more information?**

HERE ARE 3 WAYS:

1. **TALK** to your GP
2. **MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** with an ACT Health Community Dietitian by phoning **6207 9977**
3. **CHECK OUT** more at www.health.act.gov.au

