

Feeding Your Infant



Infants need good nutrition to grow and develop. Starting solid food helps your baby learn how to eat. As your child starts eating solids, you should still give breastmilk or formula when they are hungry. Over time, this will shift to more scheduled meals and snacks, as your child eats more solid food. It is important to know when and what to feed your child based on their feeding skills.

Early feeding

For the first 6 months: Breastmilk and infant formula give your infant almost all of the nutrients they need.

- If your baby is breastfed, a daily vitamin D supplement (400 IU) may be recommended.
- Please talk to your child's doctor or dietitian if you have questions about vitamins.

When to start giving solids

Talk with your child's doctor or registered dietitian to see if your infant is ready for solid foods. Your baby may be ready to start eating solid food if they:

- Are at least 4 months old (corrected age if born prematurely)
- Can hold their head up steadily and sit with help
- They show interest in foods other people are eating
- They do not push food out of their mouth with their tongue

Do not rush into giving your infant solid foods. It is OK to wait until your baby is ready.

How to start giving solids: Traditional introduction

- Purees are good choices for first foods:
 - Consider infant cereal or pureed fruits, vegetables or meats.
 - You can add breastmilk or formula to make these foods thinner.
- Use a small spoon and start with a small amount. Let your baby decide how much to eat.
- Your child will build feeding skills and show interest in purees. Then it is time to give soft finger foods and dissolvable foods.

Never leave your baby unsupervised (unwatched) while eating because of the risk of choking.

Baby-led weaning

- This is a British term referring to the introduction of new foods. It means starting with finger foods and skipping purees entirely.
- Please note that "weaning" does not mean that you should lower the amount of breastmilk or formula your baby is drinking when they start eating finger foods.
 - Consider starting with very soft cooked root vegetables, meatballs/meat patties, and pancakes. You can check to see if food is soft enough by trying it. You should be able to easily squash the food with your tongue against the roof of your mouth.
 - Some gagging is normal and is not harmful.
 - Keep pieces very soft and large enough for your baby to be able to close their fingers around it in the palm of their hand.
- Give 1 food with iron and 1 high-calorie food with most meals.

Tips

- Breastfed babies older than 6 months often need additional iron. Regularly give meat, beans, or cereal with iron.
- When you're first starting solids, feed your baby when they are awake, calm, and not too hungry or too full.
- Expect your baby to make a mess while learning to eat. Let them touch and play with food.
- Give the same food again, even if your baby did not want it. It can take up to 10 times to accept a new food. Touching and exploring new food is progress even if they do not bring the food to their mouth.
- Never force-feed. Your infant will accept food when they are ready.
- Always stir and test the temperature of food after microwaving it.

Food allergies

Giving your child foods that are common allergens may help prevent them from developing an allergy. **Please talk about this with your child's pediatrician.**

Things to avoid

- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle. This can cause tooth decay.
- Use plain, whole milk yogurt, not the sweetened kind.
- To avoid too much weight gain and health risks:
 - Avoid putting cereal or purees in a bottle.
 - Do not give juice. A little prune juice is OK if your child is constipated (has a hard time pooping).
- Do not season baby food with salt or sugar or syrups. Spices are OK.
- Avoid honey for the first year. It can cause botulism, an illness caused by bacteria.

Choking risk

- Never leave your baby unwatched during feeding.
- Avoid popcorn, nuts, seeds, raisins, raw apple, potato chips, and corn kernels.
- Cut up foods like hot dogs, cheese sticks, and grapes lengthwise.

Ideas for solid foods

Grains

- Iron-containing infant cereal (rice, oatmeal, wheat, multigrain) made with breast milk or formula, pancakes, waffles, rice crackers or wafers, teething biscuits, overcooked noodles or pasta, lightly toasted bread

Vegetables

- Steamed and/or pureed carrots, squash, sweet potato, peas, parsnips, zucchini, spinach, potato

Fruits

- Steamed and/or pureed apple, peaches, pears, plums
- Ripe bananas, avocados, halved blueberries

Proteins

- Cooked chicken and other meats that are pureed or shredded
- Meatballs, ground meats, meat patties
- Soft cooked beans (fork mashed, can peel off the skin) or hummus
- Scrambled eggs
- Small pieces of cooked fish
- Peanut butter or nut butter spread on toast or crackers in thin layers
- Whole milk yogurt, shredded cheese, cream cheese on crackers

General feeding timeline

0-4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing 8 or more times a day or frequent bottle feedings (breastmilk or formula) giving about 16-24 ounces
4-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing 6 or more times a day or frequent bottle feedings (breastmilk or formula) giving about 20-32 ounces • Consider spoon feedings 1 time a day if your baby is ready to start
6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing on demand (usually 5 or more times a day) or on-demand bottle feedings, giving about 24-32 ounces • Spoon or finger feedings 1-2 times a day • Introduce a Sippy cup or straw cup with water for practice
8-10 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing on demand (usually 5 or more times a day) or on-demand bottle feedings, giving about 16-32 ounces • Spoon and finger feedings 2-3 times a day
10-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start offering solid foods before breast or bottle feedings at mealtimes. Separate feeding times by 2-3 hours. • Spoon and finger feedings 3-5 times a day

This Family Education Sheet is available in [Arabic](#) and [Spanish](#)