

Starting Solid Foods: Around 6 Months

Starting solid foods is an exciting time for your baby and you!

Most babies are ready to eat solid foods when they're **around 6 months of age**. Baby should show these signs that he's ready for solid foods:

- sits up with little help
- has good head and neck control
- opens mouth when food is offered
- turns head away when full



If you start baby on solid foods **too early**, baby may:

- drink less breastmilk
- not be ready to chew and swallow safely

If you start baby on solid foods **too late**, baby may:

- be slow to accept new foods and flavours
- have a hard time learning to eat new textures
- not get all the vitamins and minerals (like iron) needed

Starting solid foods

Offer new foods when baby is alert and relaxed. This may increase the chance of your baby trying a new food. Continue to breastfeed when you start to offer solid foods. Here are some tips on starting solid foods:

- **Give baby 1 new food at a time.** Wait 2 days before adding the next new food. This makes it easier to tell if baby is allergic to the food.
- **Start with small amounts.** Offer 1–3 tsp (5–15 mL) of food. Offer more food if baby is still showing signs of hunger.
- **Follow baby's cues.** Wait for baby's mouth to open when you offer food. Feed as slowly or as quickly as baby wants. Stop feeding when baby shows signs of fullness. Never force baby to eat.
- **Start by offering solid foods once a day.** Soon, baby will be ready to eat more than once a day.
- **Try new foods and flavours.** Some babies are cautious eaters and need time to trust that a new food is okay to eat. Babies may need to be offered a food many times before deciding to eat it.
- **Let your baby touch and explore new foods.** Expect a mess. Messy hands and face help baby get used to new foods.
- **Baby's appetite will change from day-to-day.** Some days a baby will eat a lot, other days not as much. From 6–12 months, baby will slowly start to drink less breastmilk and eat more solid food.

Signs of hunger

- leans forward or reaches for food
- sucks or smacks lips
- opens mouth when food is offered
- puts fist in mouth



Signs of fullness

- turns head away from food
- closes mouth when food is offered
- covers mouth with hands
- fusses or cries

A healthy feeding relationship

Babies learn by watching people. When families eat together, baby learns that mealtime is a time to come together, eat, and share.

- As a parent it's your job to choose **what** foods to offer. As baby starts to eat solid foods, you are responsible for **when** and **where** baby is fed.
- It's baby's job to choose **how much** food to eat.

Trust baby to know when she's hungry and full. You're teaching baby to listen to her body.

Foods to start with

Babies need **iron** to grow and develop. The first foods offered should be iron-rich foods like:

- baby cereal with iron
- meat
- meat alternatives



For examples, see *Healthy foods for baby* on page 4.

Iron-rich foods should be offered at each meal. To help meet baby's iron needs, offer baby cereals with iron and a variety of meat and meat alternatives.

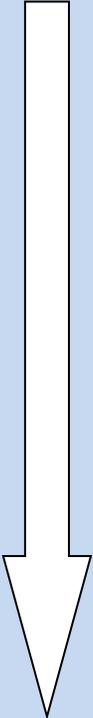


Help baby eat safely. Put baby in a high chair and stay with him while he's eating.

Try new textures

Mashed, grated, minced, chopped, or diced are all examples of food textures.

It's important for babies to try different textures. This helps your baby develop new feeding and eating skills. Every baby is different and may move through stages faster or slower. Use the table below as a **general guide**.

6 months	Baby's stage and skills	Suitable food textures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> holds head up sits with little help 	pureed smooth mashed 
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sits without help shows interest in and starts self feeding begins chewing motion 	lumpy minced grated diced 
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bites and chews feeds self with fingers tries to feed self with spoon 	soft foods, cut up cooked foods, cut up 
12 months		

Eating off a spoon is a new skill for baby to learn.

Encourage self-feeding as soon as baby shows interest.

Offer lumpy textures no later than 9 months.

Change textures as needed for baby's safety:

- Hard vegetables and fruit can be cooked or grated to be safer.
- Sticky foods like peanut butter can be spread thinly.
- Small and round foods like grapes can be cut into 4 parts with pits and seeds removed.
- Foods that are stringy or chewy like meat or long pasta can be cut up into bite-sized pieces.

Foods to Avoid:

Some foods can cause choking and aren't safe for children under 4 years of age. These include hard candies, gum, popcorn, marshmallows, whole nuts or seeds, fish with bones, and any snacks using toothpicks or skewers.

Healthy foods for baby

Once baby is eating a variety of foods, include 3–4 food groups from Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide at each meal. Baby can enjoy many of the same healthy foods your family is eating. Breastmilk is still an important food for baby.

Vegetables and Fruit	Grain Products	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives
<p>Vegetables and Fruit provide many vitamins for baby.</p> <p>To help baby’s body use iron from food, offer vegetables and fruit with vitamin C, like avocado, broccoli, kiwi, mango, peppers and sweet potato.</p>  <p>Choose fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit without added salt or sugar.</p> <p>Try grating hard fruits like apples to make them easy to pick up and chew!</p>	<p>Whole grains are healthy choices.</p> <p>Baby cereal with iron is an important food for babies. Start with a single-grain baby cereal like barley, oat, rice, or wheat.</p> <p>Try foods like barley, couscous, rice, quinoa, roti and toast strips when baby is ready for those textures.</p>  <p>Cooked, small pasta makes an easy finger food.</p>	<p>Offer plain yogurt (2.5% milk fat or higher). Plain yogurt can be sweetened by adding fruit.</p>  <p>Offer cheeses like cheddar or cottage cheese.</p> <p>3.25% milk can be introduced at 9–12 months.</p> <p>Hard cheese can be made into a finger food by grating or cubing it.</p>	<p>Meat and Alternatives provide iron.</p> <p>Examples of meat are beef, chicken, fish without bones, lamb, pork, turkey and wild game.</p> <p>Meat alternatives include black beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, split peas, eggs and tofu.</p> <p>Fish is a good source of healthy fats. Atlantic mackerel, herring, rainbow trout and salmon are good choices for your baby.</p>  <p>Cut a hardboiled egg into bite-sized pieces.</p>
<p>Change the texture of food as baby grows and develops better eating skills.</p>			



Don’t give babies honey (even if pasteurized) or foods with honey until after one year of age due to the risk of botulism (food poisoning).

Drinks for baby

The only drinks babies need are milk and water.

Milk

- At 9–12 months, babies can be offered 3.25% (homogenized) milk. At this time, babies should be eating iron-rich foods at most meals.
- Breastmilk can continue to meet a baby's milk needs. Breastfeeding until baby is 2 years of age and beyond is encouraged.
- From 6–12 months, babies will slowly start to drink less milk and eat more solid food. By the time they are 1 year old, babies should drink 2 cups (500 mL) of milk each day. Serve no more than 3 cups (750 mL) each day.



Water

Try offering a few sips of water from an open cup if you think baby is thirsty. Babies should get used to the taste of water but it should not replace milk.

Juice

Babies do not need juice. Offer baby vegetables and fruit instead of juice.

If you decide to give juice, choose 100% juice and offer it in an open cup as part of a meal or snack.

Babies should have no more than ½ cup (125 mL) of juice a day.



Drinks not recommended for baby

- **Unpasteurized milk or juice** is not safe for babies.
- **Low fat milks such as 2%, 1%, and skim** don't have enough fat and energy for babies. These milks are not recommended until 2 years of age.
- **Soy and other plant-based beverages (rice, oat, almond, potato, hemp, coconut, etc.)** should not replace breastmilk or 3.25% milk in the first 2 years. These beverages don't have enough protein, energy, and healthy fat to help babies grow and develop.
- Drinks like **pop, fruit drinks, lemonades, vitamin/flavoured water, sports drinks, coffee, tea, or herbal tea** may have added sugar or caffeine and should not be given to babies.

Making baby food

Homemade baby food:

- is a simple and healthy way to feed baby
- lets you to use the same healthy foods that the rest of the family is eating
- can be made without added salt or sugar
- is easy to do using simple kitchen tools like a fork, potato masher, blender, or grater
- lets you to make food to the texture that best matches baby's eating skills
- may cost less than buying store bought baby food
- teaches baby to enjoy the same food as the rest of the family



Homemade baby cereal isn't recommended because it doesn't contain the iron baby needs to grow and develop.

Allergies

Any healthy food, in the right texture can be introduced after 6 months of age. Research shows that waiting to give certain foods may only delay an allergy and **not** actually prevent it.

Possible signs of a food allergy:

- redness around the mouth
- rash or hives on the body
- throwing up
- diarrhea
- stomach pain
- more crying than usual

These signs can happen right away, or a few days after a food is introduced. Some may take longer to develop—such as a clear, runny nose that lasts a long time, watery or swollen eyes, or poor growth.

If you think your baby has an allergy, stop feeding the food you think your baby is allergic to. Make an appointment with the baby's doctor.

Call 9-1-1 right away if baby has these signs of an allergy:

- trouble breathing
- not able to swallow
- swelling of the tongue or mouth

For more information

See [Feeding Guide: Starting Solid Foods](#) for examples of what and how much to feed baby.

Visit healthyparentshealthychildren.ca for more information about feeding children.

Food safety information can be found at: www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/index-eng.php, click on 'Food safety', then 'Food safety information for children 5 years and under'.

General health information can be found at myhealth.alberta.ca



For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 8-1-1.