

RAISING ADVENTUROUS EATERS

with first foods

Feeding a baby during the first 1,000 days — from pregnancy to age two — can be an exciting adventure for parents, caregivers, and babies alike. It's a period of development, learning, and bonding. It's also a time when healthy eating patterns can be established for life. As the brain and body are rapidly maturing it's important that babies eat a variety of healthy foods at the right time to get the essential nutrients they need.

For anyone involved in feeding little ones — whether that's a parent, caregiver, family member, or friend — timely guidance can make it easier to navigate the ups and downs of each child's feeding journey. Clinicians can play an important role in providing families with credible education on feeding development since they provide continuity of care during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood.

That's why Partnership for a Healthier America, in collaboration with the Dr. Yum Project and a multidisciplinary team of child experts, is providing anticipatory guidance on infant feeding and early veggie introduction.

Use these first foods guides to share proactive tips and practical activities to boost feeding development and build healthy habits at every stage of a child's feeding journey.

Prenatal and Postnatal Guide

This guide includes tips to help parents and caregivers understand how food choices can support a healthy pregnancy and impact the short and long-term health of themselves and their child.

1-4 Months Guide

This guide explains the responsive feeding model and provides families with guidance on how to boost developmental skills that will be helpful when their child starts eating solid foods around 6 months.

4-6 Months Guide

While breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula are still the main food in a baby's diet, it is almost time to introduce new flavors and textures. This guide highlights the signs of readiness to begin solid foods.

6-9 Months Guide

This guide provides information for families on how to safely introduce babies to a variety of new tastes and textures alongside the important nutrients in breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula.



9-12 Months Guide

This guide provides tips for families on how to offer a wide variety of textures and flavor combinations by enjoying modified family meals and building self feeding skills.

Toddler Guide

Starting around one year, children may be less hungry and not as interested in foods they once liked. This guide offers toddler feeding tips to create a positive mealtime environment for the whole family.

Supplemental: Safe Eating Tips

Use these tips to help make food introduction even more safe for your baby including in-depth information on introducing the top 9 food allergens, ways to serve a variety of foods safely, and more.

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Raising Adventurous Eaters with First Foods is an initiative of Partnership for a Healthier America's Veggies Early & Often campaign, in collaboration with the Dr. Yum Project, which aims to raise a generation of adventurous eaters in partnership with health professionals, food manufacturers, and early childhood educators.

For more information, visit www.ahealthieramerica.org/firstfoods

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About Partnership for a Healthier America

Partnership for a Healthier America is the premier national nonprofit organization working to create lasting, systemic changes that transform the food landscape in pursuit of health equity. PHA develops evidence-based approaches that are implemented in partnership with the private sector, nonprofits, and government, leveraging PHA's assets and the partner's knowledge to accelerate the pace of transformation.

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About the Dr. Yum Project

The Dr. Yum Project is a pediatrician-led non-profit that empowers families and communities to overcome barriers to eating well through a collection of free tips, activities and recipes, along with curricula for preschools and families.

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Understanding your body's needs — for food, sleep, movement and stress reduction — is essential to make empowered personal decisions about your pregnancy. Now is the time to build a support system by engaging the people around you for support to care for your needs, including what food you want to eat. Here are food guidelines to support a healthy pregnancy and positively impact the short and long-term health of you and your child.



Choose Color

Increase the variety and quantity of colorful veggies and fruits (aim for a rainbow of foods every day) to not only maximize your nutrient intake, but to also impact your baby's taste preferences for healthy foods. That's right - your baby can "taste" what you're eating via your amniotic fluid (the liquid around the baby during pregnancy). This early exposure helps prepare for a non-picky eater.



Choose Quality

Emphasize whole foods such as colorful veggies and fruits, whole grains (oats, whole wheat bread, brown rice), calcium-rich dairy (milk, yogurt, cottage cheese), plant-based and lean animal protein sources (beans, nuts, lean meat), and healthy fat options (olive oil, nuts/seeds, eggs, fish, avocados, olives). Choose more foods close to their natural state and limit processed food when you can.



Choose Density

Pregnancy is a crucial time when protein needs are very high and dietary protein deficiency is common (especially for vegetarians/vegans). Consume a wide variety of high-quality protein (lean meat, eggs, dairy, beans, nuts) for higher energy levels, less nausea, improved development and birth weight for your baby, and lower risk of preeclampsia (dangerous high blood pressure during pregnancy).

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breast milk:

all milk expressed through breastfeeding, chestfeeding or pumping



Choose Clear

When you're pregnant, your body needs more fluid to help form the baby's amniotic fluid and to bring nutrients to the baby with proper blood circulation. Aim to drink 100 ounces per day (about 12 cups) of water. Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages, which can cause dehydration. If drinking water is a challenge, try adding fruit slices to flavor your water naturally, or try eating hydrating fresh produce such as cucumbers, watermelon, bell peppers, radishes, spinach, and tomatoes.



Choose Key Nutrients

There are crucial nutrients that you and your baby need as you grow together, and it can be hard to find enough of them in food. Take a daily comprehensive prenatal vitamin that includes iron, folate, vitamin B12, calcium, choline, vitamin D, zinc, and omega-3 fatty acids (EPA/DHA). These specific vitamins and minerals are important during all trimesters of your pregnancy and into the postnatal period.



Choose You

A partner or support network is especially important for your health and wellbeing during pregnancy and for care of your baby. Once your baby arrives, eating to support your needs in postpartum is foundational for your delivery recovery, hormone balance, mood, and energy levels. Continue to follow the healthy eating/drinking tips above, including taking a high quality prenatal vitamin. Staying hydrated is very important, as breast milk is 90% water.



Choose For The Future

The nutrition decisions made during pregnancy will help keep your baby healthy into adulthood, shape food and taste preferences when they start solid food, and set up successful nursing. The diverse flavors you eat will pass through your breast milk, just like they did when your baby was in utero.



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Your baby is growing fast and working on many new skills including feeding. Whether you offer breast milk, formula or both, you can develop skills that will be helpful for your child to start eating solid foods at around 6 months.

What should my baby eat?

Breast milk and/or iron-fortified infant formula is the true “first food” in your baby’s diet. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive consumption of breast milk until age 6 months.

For resources and support, ask your pediatrician, reach out to your local WIC office, find a local La Leche League, or scan here for more resources!



How much should my baby eat?

At 2 months, babies eat anywhere from 3 to 5 ounces of breast milk or infant formula about every 2-4 hours. By 4 months, they may eat 4 to 6 ounces per feeding. After the first 1-2 months babies may start to sleep longer at night and eat more in the day. The amount and timing of feedings may vary as you follow the responsive feeding model.

What is responsive feeding?

Responsive feeding is a model of feeding your child that is recommended by United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the AAP, and the World Health Organization. In following this model, you become responsive to your baby’s hunger and fullness cues instead of following a specific timed feeding schedule. Your baby may eat more often one day, and less often another day. Being responsive to your baby’s needs will help them learn to eat based on their own internal hunger drive. No matter their source of food, breast milk and/or iron-fortified infant formula, it’s crucial to build a feeding relationship with your child from day one.

How do I know if my baby is hungry?

Signs your baby is hungry may be fussiness, opening the mouth, rooting (a reflex that helps the baby turn their head to find breast, chest, or bottle nipple), and lip smacking. Reading baby’s cues and learning how your baby communicates hunger and fullness is an important part of responsive feeding.

How do I know if my baby is full or just needs a feeding break?

Babies will typically pause and rest but keep their mouth near the breast, chest, or bottle nipple if they are taking a break. If your baby turns away, falls asleep, or begins to show interest in other things in the environment, it’s best to honor those fullness cues and stop the feeding.

Does my baby need water?

No. Babies do not and should not drink water or any other beverages at this time because their kidneys can’t easily handle plain water. If they need fluids, they should only be given breastmilk and/or infant formula.



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Should I put solid foods like cereals in the bottle?

No. Breastmilk and formula have all the nutrition that babies need at this stage, and most babies do not need the excess calories. Solid foods are not typically recommended until around the 6 month mark. If your baby has reflux symptoms, talk to your pediatrician before adding anything to bottles of breastmilk or infant formula.

How do I know if my baby is not tolerating formula or something in the nursing parent's diet?

If your baby is having symptoms like excessive spitting up, excessive fussiness, blood in the stool or other symptoms, please talk to your pediatrician about whether it is time to consider a new formula or a change to the nursing parent's diet.



Boosting Feeding Development

- 1. GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:** Build gross motor strength through supervised tummy time on a flat surface, your lap, or your chest. Tummy time is laying babies on their stomachs for brief periods while they're awake to help build neck, shoulder, and chest strength. Your baby will need this strength around 6 months when it's time to sit up in a feeding chair to start solid foods.
- 2. FINE MOTOR AND ORAL MOTOR SKILLS:** Encourage your baby to hold toys or safe teethers in their fists. They may bring toys to their mouth to explore. This helps build eating skills for the future.
- 3. COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** In order to learn to talk, babies need to hear language and see gestures and facial expressions. Narrate what's happening throughout the day, including when you are eating or cooking. Talk to your baby face to face. Watch and respond to their attempts to communicate back to you.
- 4. TASTE TRAINING:** If you are nursing, make sure to eat a variety of foods to nourish both you and your baby. The flavors of food passed through breast milk provide your baby with a variety of tastes before you introduce solid foods.

REMEMBER to share this information with anyone in your household or support system who will also be responsible for feeding your child.



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From four to six months, breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula is still the main food in your baby's diet. Experts recommend starting solid foods at 6 months, but if your baby is showing signs of readiness for "tasting flavors," you can start offering small tastes of pureed foods shortly before 6 months. If your baby does not show these signs, do not start. Wait until your baby is ready.



What are the signs of readiness?

Your baby is ready for small tastes of pureed or smooth foods when they can hold their head up steadily, open their mouth when they see food, sit upright with support in an infant seat or high chair, keep food in their mouth and swallow it, and bring toys or their fist to their mouth to explore.



What is the "flavor window"?

The flavors your baby is exposed to early on can shape their taste preferences for life. As they approach 6 months, babies are highly receptive to a variety of flavors. If you choose to offer some tiny tastes before 6 months, focus on a variety of single ingredient foods, to not hide the flavor with other tastes. Prioritize tastes of veggies, which are often more bitter or savory, to expand your baby's taste palate.



What kind of foods should I offer my baby as they approach 6 months?

Your baby's diet is still mainly breast milk or formula. To begin experiencing flavors of foods, offer your baby a small taste of smooth pureed veggies (such as broccoli, sweet potatoes, beets) and smooth pureed fruits (such as peaches, apples, berries).



Previous recommendations on waiting 3-5 days in between introducing new foods is no longer necessary when offering low allergenic foods such as veggies or fruits. If your baby or family has a history of allergies, talk to your baby's doctor before beginning.. See the 6-9 Months Guide and "Safe Eating Tips" section for answers to common questions about safely starting solids for your baby at 6 months.



How much should my baby be tasting?

When offering foods, think variety not volume. **As your baby approaches 6 months**, food is more for taste exposure, not for calories or nutrients, which your baby is getting from breast milk and/or formula. Offer just one to two teaspoons of a one-ingredient food, to not hide the flavor. Prioritize a variety of veggies. You can offer smooth pureed food on a soft baby spoon or from your clean fingertip.

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Why does my baby make a face when tasting food?

Sometimes babies make faces when they try certain foods. These expressions do not mean they don't like these foods. It is often just a reaction to a new and different texture. Offer another taste, and if your baby opens their mouth, you know they want more! Often fruits are easy for babies to enjoy because of their sweetness. Bitter or savory foods like some veggies may take more practice before your baby appears to like them. Make sure to offer those more often.

When do I offer allergenic foods?

Wait until your baby is 6 months old to introduce the top 9 foods that often cause allergies (dairy, egg, peanut, tree nut, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, sesame). Research shows that this early exposure, and continued regular exposure, helps to reduce the risk of developing severe food allergies. Talk to your pediatrician and see the 6-9 Months Guide and "Safe Eating Tips" section for answers to common questions about safely starting solids, including allergenic foods, for your baby at 6 months.



Boosting Feeding Development

- 1. ORAL MOTOR SKILLS:** When babies nibble on their fingers, hands, and teethers, they are learning to fine tune their jaw movements and explore with their mouths. You can help babies enjoy this time of exploration by offering a variety of safe teethers in many different shapes and textures.
- 2. GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:** Encourage your baby to roll with supervised "tummy time." First they will roll from belly to back and then eventually from back to belly. This time will help them build their core muscles so they can sit up and eat solid foods as they approach 6 months.
- 3. FINE MOTOR SKILLS:** Encourage your baby to grab onto teethers or other safe toys. This skill will be important as they learn to hold a spoon once they have started eating solids around 6 months.
- 4. COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Talk to your baby face to face, pausing occasionally to watch and respond to their attempts to communicate back to you. You are getting these skills ready for sharing conversation during meals together, so keep distractions like screen time to a minimum and enjoy the connections you make with your baby.
- 5. TASTE TRAINING:** If you try tastes of different flavors close to 6 months, notice what they immediately accept and reject. Make sure to offer foods like veggies with more bitter or sour tastes more frequently than fruits, once you start feeding solids regularly at 6 months.

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Now your baby is ready to be a true food explorer! This is the time to introduce many new flavors and textures. With practice, babies will accept these new foods and will ask for more. Simple modifications to family meals is a great way for your baby to build new skills and become an adventurous eater.



What Foods Do I Offer?

- Introduce small amounts of a wide variety of fruits, veggies, proteins, and grains in a rainbow of colors. Fruits and veggies have a low risk of allergic reactions and don't have to be introduced one at a time.
- For detailed information on introducing common high-allergen foods (dairy, egg, peanut, tree nut, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, sesame), talk to your pediatrician and see the section on "Safe Eating Tips"
- Offer plenty of iron-rich foods like meats, legumes, green veggies, and iron fortified cereals.
- Spices like cinnamon, pepper, curry, garlic powder, and fresh or dried herbs like basil and parsley are a great way to introduce more flavors.
- Continue offering foods many times in rotation. It may take babies 8-10 tries over multiple days or weeks to embrace the flavors of some foods like veggies.
- When using store-bought baby foods, select products with over 50% veggies or single-vegetable purees to help train babies' taste buds. Fruit and veggie blends may hide the flavor of veggies.



How Much Do I Offer?

- From 6-9 months, offer 3 meals per day at family mealtimes starting at 2-3 tablespoons of pureed (smoothly blended) or soft foods and gradually reaching about ½ a cup. Remember you are feeding responsively, so it's ok if your baby doesn't eat the full amount. Babies decide how much they'd like to eat and when they are full.
- At this age, it is important that babies have enough hunger for the important calories, fat, protein, and other nutrients from breast milk and/or formula. Consider offering solid foods after or between breast milk or formula feedings.
- Respect your baby's hunger cues. When they turn their face, close their mouth when food approaches, and/or lose interest, they are likely done eating.

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Products approved to use PHA's icon contain over 50% veggies and no additives.

PHA  **Veggies Early & Often**
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How Do I Offer Foods?

- Always supervise your baby during mealtime. Sometimes babies will gag when they sense a new texture in their mouth. If they are frequently gagging, try a smoother texture. With more practice and exposure, gagging often decreases.
- Put food in front of your baby on their tray or table to let them explore with their hands. This exploration, although messy, is an important step to encourage your baby to try new foods. It also supports brain and fine motor development.
- Adapt family meals by blending, fork mashing, or finely dicing soft foods. Strips of soft, “squishable” foods about the width of your pinky finger are perfect at this age too.



What About Drinks?

- Breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula feedings are still the main way that babies get nutrition and hydration.
- Offer a few small sips of water in a small open cup or straw cup so babies get used to the taste of plain water. Offer no more than 4 ounces of water per day.
- Babies under 12 months should not be offered juice or other beverages.



Boosting Feeding Development

- 1. ORAL MOTOR SKILLS:** Develop baby’s control and coordination for safe swallowing by providing a variety of purees they can eat from a spoon. Small, squishable pieces of finger foods can help them learn to bite and chew. As your baby tries new foods, you’ll often see them push the food out with the tip of their tongue. This natural “tongue thrust reflex” will slowly begin to go away in the next few months.
- 2. GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:** Position babies for feeding with support for the torso (chest, belly, and back). Once their knees bend over the edge of the high chair seat, they need a footrest for support.
- 3. FINE MOTOR SKILLS:** Providing soft pieces of food can help babies start to “rake” foods with their hands and hold larger strips in their fists. By 9-12 months, the raking grasp will turn into a pincer grasp where they precisely grab and release foods with their fingers.
- 4. COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Share conversations with your baby during mealtimes by asking questions and talking about the food you are eating together.
- 5. TASTE TRAINING:** Introduce the same food in different ways with different textures. Try boiling, blanching, steaming, roasting and adding different spices to veggies to make them more fun and interesting. Remember, it may take many exposures to a new food before your baby may appear to like it.

REMEMBER to share this information with anyone in your household or support system who will also be responsible for feeding your child.

FOR MORE EASY WAYS TO MODIFY FAMILY MEALS FOR YOUR NEWEST EATER, SCAN HERE.



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Now is the time for your baby to move past purees and smashed foods to begin exploring a wide variety of textures and flavor combinations by enjoying modified versions of family meals. Engage your baby in mealtime conversations and embrace the mess, as your baby is learning how to self feed at this age.



What Foods Do I Offer?

- **VARIETY:** Continue to offer a variety of fruits, veggies, proteins, and grains in a rainbow of colors. Share family meals together with recipes that have more combined ingredients, flavors, and spices. If your child chooses not to eat certain veggies or fruits, continue offering them multiple times on other days. Sometimes up to 8-10 tries to help with taste acceptance.
- **TEXTURE:** By 9 months, make sure your baby has moved on from pureed or smooth foods to chewing a variety of soft bite-sized or handheld foods. Store-bought purees and pouches can be an easy way to feed your baby, but limit them to times when they may be needed for convenience, or use as a dip for more textured foods.
- **ALLERGENIC FOODS:** By 9 months, your baby may have tried all 9 of the high-allergen foods: dairy, egg, peanut, tree nut, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, sesame. Once a high-allergen food is introduced, it is important to maintain it in your baby's diet on a regular basis. Early and constant exposure has been shown to reduce the risk of developing food allergies later.
- **READ LABELS:** Be aware that many convenient toddler "snack foods" like cheese puffs, fruit-flavored gummy snacks, yogurt melts, and toddler prepackaged meals may have more added salt and sugar than what is recommended for that age. Try to limit using them.



How Much Do I Offer?

- Around 9 months, most babies eat 3-5 small meals or snacks, spread throughout the day. Offer about 1/2 a cup of a variety of foods per meal.
- Babies still need breastmilk or formula for calories and nutrition but may be slowly replacing bottles with solid food. Consider offering meals or snacks before formula and/or breast milk as your child's interest shifts to solid foods.
- Remember to look for hunger and fullness cues. Trust your baby to regulate their own food intake and do not pressure them to take more bites.



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How Do I Offer Foods?

- Instead of being spoon fed or handed foods, at 9 months babies should be mostly picking up foods and spoons and feeding themselves. Continue close supervision while serving finger foods.
- Embrace the mess. Allowing babies to get messy during meal times helps with sensory development and lets them become more familiar and comfortable with foods with a variety of textures. If they start throwing food, it may mean they are done eating and ready to get down from their chair.
- Feed your baby modified versions of your family meals so they can get used to the ways you season foods. It also helps reduce the need to prepare multiple meals now and in the future. This may mean chopping an ingredient smaller or cooking it slightly longer so it is soft. Babies under 12 months old need very little sodium, so set aside your baby's meal portion before seasoning with salt for the rest of the family.



What About Drinks?

- Your baby is still consuming breast milk and/or formula for calories, hydration, and nutrition. Wait until 12 months to substitute some or all of this intake with whole cow's milk. At one year of age, more calories will come from solids than whole milk or breast milk. Talk to your child's doctor if you have any questions or concerns about stopping bottles or using an alternative milk.
- Offer up to a max of 8 ounces of water for the full day in a small open cup or straw cup. This water is important to help support healthy digestion and may even prevent chronic constipation.
- Milk, juice, and other beverages (carbonated soft drinks, tea, etc.) should not be offered to babies under 12 months old.



Boosting Feeding Development

- 1. ORAL MOTOR SKILLS:** At 9 months, babies develop more of a circular or rotary chew when eating. If their chew appears to be more of an up and down or "squish with the tongue and swallow" pattern, you can encourage better chewing by placing a soft food item directly on the jaw in the back of their mouth where their new molars will soon appear. Press firmly to help your child feel the food and to prompt that first chew.
- 2. GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:** Spend plenty of time playing on the floor and encourage babies to attempt to crawl, pull up to stand, take steps holding onto furniture and eventually take steps independently. These activities strengthen leg, arm, and core muscles (chest, belly, & back) and will help them to feel stable as they sit in a feeding chair and self feed.
- 3. FINE MOTOR SKILLS:** The "raking" movement with their whole hand gradually turns into a pincer grasp, where they can more precisely grab and release food with their thumb and pointer finger. Help your baby learn to dip and scoop with a spoon by gently guiding their spoon as they hold it.
- 4. COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Babies at this age are beginning to understand language more than they can express it. Continue talking about what you are doing throughout the day such as naming foods when grocery shopping or preparing meals. Engage your baby in family meal conversations.

REMEMBER to share this information with anyone in your household or support system who will also be responsible for feeding your child.

SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR IDEAS AND RECIPES FOR FINGER FOODS:



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During your baby's first year, growth is fast so they are very hungry. However, after age one, growth and metabolism slow down. You might notice your baby, now a toddler, is less hungry and not as interested in every meal. They may not enjoy foods that they once liked. Be patient as toddlers may need the same kind of practice with foods, like veggies, as they did when they first started solids.



What to Eat & How Much

- Offer 3 meals (¾-1 cup of food per meal) and 2 snacks. Continue to share family meals with your toddler.
- Start with small portions, such as 2 tablespoons of each food, and offer more if they are still hungry. Some days they may eat very little, and some days they may eat a lot. This is normal, so try not to pressure your child to eat more.
- Aim for at least three food groups at meals and at least two food groups at snacks. Prioritize meals/snacks that include protein or dairy (which contain healthy fats) and fiber-rich carbohydrates (veggies, fruits, and whole grains) to help kids get a variety of nutrients and feel fuller, longer.
- Limit use of toddler prepackaged snacks like yogurt melts, crackers, and puffs which may have too much added salt or sugar.
- Continue to prepare food safely to avoid choking hazards: chop or grind up whole nuts, cut hard uncooked veggies into thin strips or cook until soft (carrots, celery), slice tiny round foods in half (blueberries) and larger round foods in quarters (grapes, cherry tomatoes), cut hot dogs into thin half moon slices, thinly slice hard fresh fruit (apple), shred or thinly slice cheese, thinly spread nut and seed butters onto toast or other foods, avoid popcorn and some types of candy (hard candy, jelly beans, fruit snacks, gummy or sticky candy).

**If your child requires an alternative milk, talk to your pediatrician about what choices are available and how to make sure there is enough fat and nutrients in their diet.*



Fill half your plate at each eating opportunity with vegetables and fruits

FOR EACH MEAL OR SNACK...

CHOOSE 1 - 3:

- **VEGGIES:** Offer a rainbow of colors every day for maximum exposure to flavors and nutrients. Set a family goal to try a new veggie each week!
- **FRUITS:** Fresh, frozen, or canned in juice all count! Aim for a variety of whole fruits for maximum fiber and nutrients, not juice.
- **WHOLE GRAINS:** Aim for at least half of grains to be whole grains each day (oats, whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole grain pasta, corn or whole wheat tortillas, whole grain pita or naan).

CHOOSE 1 - 2:

- **PROTEIN:** Eggs, ground or shredded meats (turkey, beef, chicken, pork, lamb), fish & shellfish, tofu, beans & lentils, nut or seed butter
- **DAIRY*:** milk, cottage cheese, yogurt, cheese

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Toddler Beverages

- Around 12 months, your child should transition from breast milk or formula to whole cow's milk.* Fat is important for brain development until 24 months. Alternatively, you can continue to offer breast milk through breastfeeding or from a cup.
- Use cups instead of bottles by age 12 months. Straw cups are great for exercising important facial muscles that are used for eating and speaking. Sometimes toddlers will drink less milk when they transition to a cup. Toddlers should be getting most of their nutrition from solid foods, and less from milk. Limit milk intake to 16-24 ounces per day.
- Encourage drinking plain water. Juice is not necessary at this age. Even if diluted, it introduces unnecessary calories and can contribute to cavities. It may also encourage a strong preference for sweet foods. If you do decide to offer juice occasionally, offer no more than 4 ounces (½ cup) of 100% juice.



Approaches to Toddler Eating

- Remember parents and caregivers decide “when,” “what,” and “where” to eat. Your toddler decides “if” they are going to eat and “how much.” Offer a meal with a variety of foods, including something you know they will eat and a few new foods to try.
- Sometimes toddlers will show new preferences and may stop eating foods they once enjoyed. It's important to keep rotating foods, like veggies, onto their plate so they can learn to accept them again.
- If your toddler won't touch their veggies, it's okay to “hide” them in some favorite foods such as blending spinach into pasta sauce or butternut squash into mac & cheese. But also keep them in plain sight on the plate so that over time they will feel more comfortable exploring them by touching, smelling, playing, and then finally eating them!
- When possible, stick to a schedule of eating, and limit additional snacking or “grazing” between set eating times. Allow 2-3 hours between each meal and snack so your child can develop hunger for the next eating opportunity.



REMEMBER to share this information with anyone in your household or support system who will also be responsible for feeding your child.



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RAISING ADVENTUROUS EATERS

with first foods

Positive Mealtime Environment

- Help kids develop a mindful way of eating by not using electronic devices during mealtime. Use this time to have conversations and focus on family and food. If toddlers are not interested in eating, connect with them through conversation and enjoy the family time! If they'd like to get down, they can always do so and wait until the next meal or snack.
- Toddlers are watching YOU and what you eat so make sure to include a lot of variety in your diet. Now is the time to practice foods that may not be your favorites and show them that even adults can learn to love new foods, like veggies.
- Your toddlers are also listening. Set the stage and create a positive food environment, which includes a neutral approach to all foods and body shapes and sizes. Your attention and positive reinforcement can be as effective as offering treats as rewards.

I love that you are touching and tasting your food. You are a true food explorer!!



Boosting Feeding Development

- 1. ORAL MOTOR SKILLS:** Stop using bottles and pacifiers completely at one year. Prolonged bottle use puts children at higher risk for ear infections, cavities, and delayed oral motor skills.
- 2. GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:** By 12 months of age, some children are walking but don't rush it. Crawling and/or cruising along furniture helps them develop the tiny muscles in the hands that allow them to hold utensils.
- 3. FINE MOTOR SKILLS:** Food placed into partitioned plates and ice cube trays can help children develop spoon and fork skills because the edges of the partitions provide a barrier as they scoop or pierce soft foods. Use a small child's safety fork with rounded tips.
- 4. COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** At this age, children can imitate gestures and may be able to communicate back to you in their own way. When talking to your child, remember to pause after each question for at least 3 seconds to allow them time to process the information and attempt to respond. For example, ask if they want more food. Even a smile is a response, so never withhold food if they cannot gesture or talk yet.

**If your child requires a non-dairy alternative, talk to your pediatrician about what choices are available and how to make sure there is enough fat and nutrients in their diet.*

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Dr. Yum's Favorite Recipes

chicken veggie meatballs

Prep 20 minutes, Cook 30 minutes, Yields 48 1-inch Meatballs

ingredients

- ½ sweet onion, very finely chopped
- ½ yellow squash, very finely chopped
- ½ zucchini, very finely chopped
- 1 carrot, grated
- 1 cup baby spinach, very finely chopped (fresh)
- 2 pounds lean ground chicken
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 teaspoons yellow mustard
- ½ tablespoon worcestershire sauce (omit for fish allergies)
- 1 cup rice cracker crumbs



method

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Saute vegetables in a pan with a small amount of olive oil. When vegetables are soft, add chopped spinach and stir until wilted. Remove vegetables from heat and allow to cool a bit. In a large mixing bowl, place 2 pounds of lean ground chicken. Season with 1/2 teaspoon each of salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Add ketchup, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, and rice cracker crumbs. Add vegetables and gently mix everything together using your hands or a potato masher. Using a small scoop, form meatballs and place on a baking sheet sprayed with non-stick spray. Bake meatballs for 15 minutes, then turn them and bake for an additional 15 minutes.

Add to your favorite sauce or eat plain. They also taste great cold and can easily be packed for lunch.

BABY FRIENDLY TIP: Break the meatballs into small pieces or make teeny tiny meatballs to help your baby practice self-feeding and perfect the pincer grasp.

broc and cara treats

Prep 15 minutes, Cook 15 minutes, Yields 20 Treats

ingredients

- 5 cups broccoli, chopped
- 3 carrots, grated (1/4 cup reserved)
- 1 onion
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs (substitute ground cashews for gluten-free)
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (coconut oil as an alternative)

method

Steam broccoli in a steamer basket or an inch or so of water until fork tender. Pulse broccoli, grated carrots (minus 1/4 cup), onion, egg, salt, cumin, panko, and parmesan cheese in a food processor. Pulse just till chopped finely. Mix in the remaining 1/4 cup of carrots. Using 1 tablespoon of the mix at a time, form 2 x 1 inch nuggets. Heat oil in a skillet. Flatten each nugget and sauté on one side until crispy and then flip. Serve warm.

BABY FRIENDLY TIP: Cut into smaller pieces so they are easy for your baby to pick up and chew. If serving larger pieces, always supervise to make sure your baby is taking small, comfortable bites for their stage of eating.



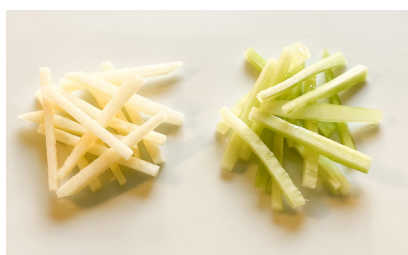
RAISING ADVENTUROUS EATERS with first foods

Keeping your baby safe while eating is a top priority. Here are safe eating tips to address some of the most common questions parents and caregivers might encounter from the start of introducing solid foods through the first year of your baby's life.



How to Serve Foods Safely

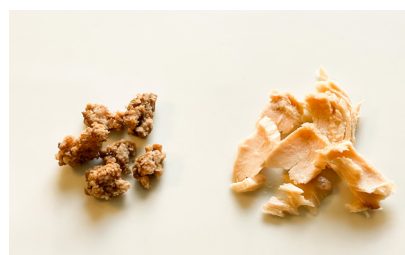
To determine if a food is safe for your baby to eat, ask yourself: Can baby break it down easily with just their gums? Is it easily squished between your finger and thumb? In addition to offering pureed or blended foods, here are 6 ways to cut soft and safe foods for baby:



MATCHSTICKS: Soft, fresh foods with skins removed and cut into small, manageable slivers (example: peeled fresh cucumber or apple)



HANDHELDS: Larger but very soft pieces held in baby's entire hand to explore and bite (example: chunks of roasted butternut squash)



SHREDDED: Offer moist, tender foods that pull apart easily into tiny shreds. (example: soft cooked ground beef or salmon)



SMASHED: A quick "smash" on a round food can prevent choking yet still allow baby to pick it up with ease. Smashed foods can also be presented on a preloaded utensil for self-feeding (example: cooked beans or soft sweet potato)



PINKY STRIPS: Soft, moist foods that baby can gnaw and still manage small pieces that break off. Tip! Roll in breadcrumbs to make the food less slippery for baby's grasp. (example: strips of roasted zucchini or avocado)



PEA-SIZED CUBES: Baby will rake up a few soft cubes at this age. Offer soft fresh foods or cooked foods, never offer hard cubes (e.g., hard cheeses) that could lodge in baby's airway if accidentally swallowed whole. (example: kiwi or soft melon)



What To Avoid Before 1 Year

FOODS: Some foods have a higher risk for food poisoning and severe illness in young children with developing immune systems. These foods to avoid include honey, deli meats (hot dogs, salami, bologna, deli turkey, etc.), raw or undercooked eggs or meats, and unpasteurized or raw dairy products or cheeses. Items with milk products should say "pasteurized milk" in the ingredient list on the label.

BEVERAGES: A baby's primary source of nutrition and hydration in the first year is breast milk and/or infant formula. Plain water may be introduced in small amounts starting at 6 months. Other types of beverages such as milk, juice, and sugar sweetened drinks should not be offered to babies under the age of 12 months.

This guide is provided by:



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RAISING ADVENTUROUS EATERS with first foods



Choking vs Gagging: Keeping an Eye on Baby

- Gagging is nature's way of trying to protect your baby's airway. For babies who are just starting solids, gagging is a natural response to new tastes, new textures, and subtle temperature changes.
- A choking child may appear panicked, wide-eyed with an open mouth and drooling, and progressing to bluish skin in or around their lips, gums, fingernails, or eyes. Audible gasps, faint noises, or wheezing may be detected, but typically there is little sound because the airway is blocked. Ask your pediatrician about CPR training in your area before starting solid foods with your baby.
- Common food choking hazards to avoid: whole nuts and seeds (peanuts, sunflower seeds, almonds), hard uncooked vegetables (carrots, celery), round foods (whole blueberries, grapes, or beans), popcorn, hot dogs, hard fresh fruit (chunks of apple), large chunks of cheese (string cheese), spoonfuls of nut and seed butters (undiluted peanut butter), candy (hard candy, jelly beans, fruit snacks).



Pacifier and Feeding Development

- During the first 6 months, pacifiers are helpful for soothing and decreasing the chance of SIDS, the sudden, unexpected and unexplained death of an apparently healthy baby. Extended use may lead to feeding and swallowing problems and can pose a safety risk. It could even impact your baby's facial development.
 - ◇ Stop daytime use of the pacifier by 6 months of age to avoid mouth injuries from falling with a pacifier in the mouth.
 - ◇ Stop using a pacifier for naps/nighttime around 12 months. This will help them develop a mature swallow pattern to safely advance to a variety of textured foods.

top 9 food allergens



Food Allergens

Between 6-12 months, one by one, introduce the top 9 food allergens, foods that have the highest rates of food allergies, including dairy, egg, peanut, tree nut, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, and sesame. Research shows that early exposure, and continued regular exposure, helps to reduce the risk of developing severe food allergies.

**Talk to your pediatrician if you have concerns about introducing these foods or if you have a family history of food allergies.*

- Make these foods baby friendly. For example, take a teaspoon of smooth peanut butter and dilute it in a teaspoon or more of warm water so it is not as sticky and thick, which could be a choking hazard
- Ideally, pick a time when your baby will be awake for about two hours so that you can monitor for reactions. Wait at least two to three days between introducing new allergenic foods and watch for symptoms such as:
 - ◇ Skin: rash; itching; swelling of lips, tongue, face
 - ◇ Color Change: bluish, flushed, or pale color. For babies with darker skin, look for color changes in the lips, gums, tongue, and/or fingernails.
 - ◇ Lungs: coughing, wheezing, trouble breathing
 - ◇ Digestive system: vomiting, diarrhea
 - ◇ Nervous system: drowsiness

Call your baby's doctor with any mild symptoms such as rash or itching. Call 911 or visit the emergency room for any severe reactions.



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