

RAISING ADVENTUROUS EATERS with first foods

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 iron-fortified 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 breast milk and/or iron-fortified infant formula.



This guide is provided by:



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breast milk:

all milk expressed through breastfeeding or pumping

Should I put solid foods like cereals in the bottle?

No. Breast milk 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 breast milk 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.



The information contained in this guide should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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