

## **TODDLER NUTRITION - EARLY YEARS BABY GROWTH**

- Baby's nutritional needs change as she goes through the various stages of growth, so keeping her diet varied and updated to suit her needs is a must.

(Sources: [\*The New York Academy of Sciences\*](#), [\*The Lancet\*](#))

In other words, the littlest member of your family has significant nutritional needs. Knowing these requirements and arming yourself with the right [toddler nutritional facts](#) are essential to raising a healthy, happy child.

### **Milk**

Milk is the foundation of good health during the first year and beyond. Each milk feed is a full meal by itself since it already provides all the calcium, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals your baby requires daily.

Breast milk is the best and most recommended source of nutrition for newborns, making it vital for mothers to take care of themselves and maintain optimal health to be fully prepared for breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding babies feed on demand, which can be around six to 10 feedings a day for the first week, gradually adjusting to eight feedings by month one and eventually five feedings by the sixth month.

You may also use infant formula as a full option or to supplement breastfeeding. However, get the advice of your pediatrician first to make sure you are choosing the most suitable formula for your baby and following proper formula preparation.

The right formula can provide your baby with a good head start by providing growth- and immunity-boosting nutrients, antioxidants, probiotics and prebiotics.

### **Fruits and Vegetables**

You may start offering fruits and vegetables when your baby is around six months old. For fruits, try a few teaspoons of banana, avocado or pear, mashed or pureed and strained well. For veggies, steamed and pureed spinach, broccoli, carrots and sweet potato are your best bets.

Offer one new type of food at a time, to observe her preferences as well to watch out for potential allergies. For the first few feedings, don't worry if your baby eats just one tablespoon per meal – give her time to explore the tastes and textures of new food. Eventually, she should graduate to four to eight tablespoons after a few months, and a small cup per serving by the time she's one year old.

### **Food for “older” babies**

Once your baby reaches eight to 10 months, she may be ready for more complex foods. Boiled egg yolk or cooked and pureed tender meat will provide her muscle-building nutrients such as protein and essential iron, zinc and B vitamins. By 10 months, you can start offering other dairy sources such as yoghurt, cheese and whole milk for strong teeth and bones.

### **Food for Thought**

The task of feeding your baby correctly may seem overwhelming at first, but it's also an exciting adventure of learning and discovery for you and your baby.

- When your baby is ready, bring her to the table during meal times.
- Let her take in the sights, smells and sounds of good food, conversations and meal time activity.
- With training and encouragement, allow her to test her skills in holding her food or using utensils.
- Model positive and healthy attitudes toward food.
- Look for ways to make mealtimes a pleasant time for bonding and learning (guaranteed messy but fun!).

Remember that ensuring your baby's health is more than just making the right food choices or efficiently

organizing feeding schedules. It's also about instilling values that will help them stay fit and strong – physically, mentally and emotionally – and equipping them with good eating habits they'll carry with them throughout their lives.