

CAN MY BABY EAT THIS NOW? AN INFANT FEEDING GUIDE

When can my baby eat what ?

It's a common question among both newbie and not-so new parents. And it's a helpful and important question to ask. An informed approach to feeding your child is crucial for ensuring she reaches her developmental milestones and achieves her full growth potential. When you feed your baby correctly, you're building one of the most important foundations of physical, mental and emotional wellness.

Infant Feeding: Recommended Foods

Infants need the right amount of vitamins, minerals, calories, essential fatty acids, macronutrients and other nutrients to thrive as they undergo a period of rapid growth. The following can be your guide to providing a varied, balanced diet for your baby as she grows from 0 to 12 months:

- **What to feed babies from 0 to 6 months**

Feed your baby only breast milk or pediatrician-approved milk product during this time . The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for up to six months, and to continue doing so to 2 years and beyond, along with complementary foods. When selecting this route, mothers must follow a healthy diet to give her body the energy she needs to produce breast milk and the stamina to nurse her baby day and night.

Adding a supplemental source of nutrition such as Similac Mama to your diet can help you meet your increased nutritional requirements while breastfeeding.

If doing mixed or bottle feeding, choose the right infant milk for your child, depending on her nutritional requirements. A baby who is doing great may need a different milk product from a premature baby, or a fussy baby, or a baby with allergies.

- **What to feed babies at 6 months**

Milk is still the most important source of nutrition for your baby's entire first year. You may **slowly try to offer solid food by 6 months**, as some babies at this age can also start to show signs that they are ready for solids.

Developmental signs of solid readiness

Some of the basic signs that tell you your baby is ready to transition to solids include:

- Can hold head up and sit upright without support
- Shows motor skills *and* interest for eating, such as opening mouth when offered a bite, or the ability to pick food up with thumb and forefinger and to put food into mouth
- Lost tongue-thrust reflex from birth, and thus able to move tongue to push food to the back of mouth and swallow.

Starter solids

Try one teaspoon first and offer one type of food at a time.

- Begin introducing solids with mashed fruit and steamed and pureed vegetables and root crops: squash, sweet potato, banana, apple, peach and avocado.
- You may mix in some milk to the mash as a nutrition boost and to achieve a runny consistency to ease the transition.

- **What to feed babies from 6 to 9 months**

As your baby gets used to solids, you may notice that she will eventually move up to **four feedings per day and increase to two to three tablespoons of fruit**. Encourage your little foodie to explore more; put soft food cut up into finger food sizes in front of her and let her reach out for the food and put it in her mouth.

- Continue with the well-cooked vegetables and strained fruits, but this time you may start offering the purees in a thicker, lumpier consistency.

- For added protein, try cooked and pureed tofu, legumes (e.g., kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas) or meat such as boiled chicken.

- Iron-fortified cereals such as oatmeal and barley mixed with milk are not only nutritious but easy to prepare.

● What to feed babies from 9 to 12 months

At this point, her fruits or vegetables intake per meal is expected to increase to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup to one cup. From purees, your baby can now **upgrade to mashed and minced foods**. She has also most likely become more adept at the use of her pincer grasp, which refers to her ability to pick things up with her thumb and forefinger.

- This is a good time to add more finger foods into her menu. Cooked pasta shells or spirals, hard-boiled and cut up eggs, fish fillet, fruit cubes, small pieces of bread, baby crackers and cereal puffs add variety, nutrition and fun to her diet.

- You may also offer your little gourmand a little bit of soft pasteurized cheese, cottage cheese and unsweetened yoghurt. As always, offer one type of food at a time to track potential allergies.

Baby's first bites

As the list of recommended foods show, your baby doesn't need complicated recipes or hard-to-find ingredients. Fresh foods in season, prepared in the simplest manner, are your best options for eating well.

Moreover, while it's good to monitor or even document what she eats daily, there is no need to fret if she doesn't seem to have an appetite for greens or milk once in a while. Make your assessment based on her weekly intake instead of a plate-by-plate basis and [track your baby's development month by month](#).

As your baby gets to know the world of food, you will get to learn more about her amazing capacity to grow and thrive physically, mentally and emotionally with the right support and care. So take it easy and enjoy your baby's adventure to solids – where every mouthful is a milestone.