



A Physical Activity Resource

# FEEDING MY INFANT: 6-12 MONTHS

## Introducing Solid Foods

Solid foods or "complementary foods" are introduced to infants when they are developmentally ready. This is typically around 6 months of age and not before 4 months of age. Introducing solid foods helps infants learn about eating, giving them new experiences with taste and texture, and strengthens skills needed for language.

## Feeding Tips

- Save money by preparing infant food at home.
- Introduce one single-ingredient food at a time. Wait 3-5 days before introducing another new food, observing for potential allergic reactions to the food.
- Introduce foods from all the food groups. Foods can be started in any order.
- Choose nutrient-dense foods. Most calories still come from human milk or iron-fortified infant formula for much of the first year of life, but by 6 months infants are no longer meeting their iron needs from just human milk or iron-fortified infant formula.
- Do not force-feed food that is not accepted. It may take 8-10 interactions with a new food before your infant tries it.
- Use infant-friendly dishware and utensils. Make sure dishware and utensils are small and made from non-toxic, unbreakable material.
- Let your infant try to feed themselves with the spoon with your assistance, and offer "finger foods", small pieces of soft food less than 1/2 inch wide.

- Be patient. Infants make a mess when they feed themselves and it can take longer for them to eat at this age.
- Always talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about feeding your infant.

## Food Allergies

Major food allergens, such as wheat and fish, can be given to infants as complementary foods if the infant is not high-risk for developing a food allergy. Introducing allergenic foods early can reduce risk of developing food allergies. Begin introducing major food allergens around 6 months of age and offer them regularly. If your infant is high-risk, talk to your health care provider about when the potential food allergen should be introduced.

## Prevent Choking

- Your infant should sit upright while eating.
- Finger foods should start out as long, thin (1/2 inch) and squishable. Smaller, bite-size food will be easier to hold around 9 months.
- Never leave your infant alone while eating.
- Do not give solid foods, such as infant cereal, in a bottle.

### SOME POTENTIAL CHOKING HAZARDS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 4 YEARS OF AGE:

hard raw vegetables or fruit (such as carrots and apples), whole round or tube-shaped foods (such as cherry tomatoes, grapes, and hot dogs), dried fruit, tough or large chunks of meat and cheese, unthinned nut and seed butters, whole or chopped nuts and seeds, popcorn, pretzels, ice cubes

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## Feeding Guide

### TEXTURE/CONSISTENCY

**6-8 Months:** strained, pureed/mashed

**8-12 Months:** ground/finely chopped/diced

<b>BEVERAGES</b>	Human milk or infant formula, water (small amounts)
<b>GRAIN GROUP</b> plain, small pieces (Whole Grains Preferred)	Iron-fortified infant cereal, bread, crackers  Added at around 8-12 Months: pasta, grits, soft tortillas
<b>FRUIT GROUP</b> plain, soft, ripe, peeled, cooked (as needed)	Fruits such as apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, melons, peaches, pears
<b>VEGETABLE GROUP</b> plain, peeled, cooked	Vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, green beans, green peas, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes
<b>DAIRY GROUP</b> plain	Cheese, yogurt (including soy-based yogurt), cottage cheese
<b>PROTEIN GROUP</b> plain, skin/fat/bones removed	Meat, poultry, <b>fish*</b> , eggs, tofu, legumes (beans, peas lentils)
<b>DO NOT FEED YOUR INFANT</b>	Potential choking hazards, <b>honey*</b> , cow's milk, plant-based milk, juice, sugar-sweetened beverages, adult cereals, added sugar, added salt, syrups, artificial sweeteners, unpasteurized foods and beverages

\* Children under the age of 12 months should never be given honey. It can cause infant botulism, a deadly disease.

\* Discuss types and amounts of fish with your health care provider to limit mercury exposure.

## Keep Infant Safe

- After heating food, stir, let the food sit for 30 seconds, and taste-test it before feeding it to your infant.
- Make sure meat, poultry, fish, and eggs are cooked to well-done temperatures and always use a food thermometer.

### SAFE COOKING TEMPERATURES CAN BE FOUND AT:

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/safe-minimum-internal-temperatures>

- Never feed your infant from the jar or container. Place a small amount of food from the jar in a dish and refrigerate the rest.
- Use home-prepared and open, store-bought infant food within 2 days, meat and egg foods within 1 day.
- Never re-use infant food. Any food not eaten by your infant should be discarded.



FOR INFORMATION ON FEEDING YOUR TODDLER, CHECK OUT THE **FEEDING MY TODDLER: 12-23 MONTHS** FACTSHEET.

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