

Feeding Your Child

Your Baby at Four to Six Months

Rice Cereal

Infant cereal is usually the first "solid" food fed to babies. It is easy to digest and is a good source of iron. Rice cereal is often fed first, because it is the least likely to cause allergic reactions. Choose boxed, dry infant cereals rather than the jarred, wet-pack cereals. Do not use mixed cereal.

The dry cereals are less expensive and do not contain sugar or mixtures of foods that may cause allergies.

Offer cereal to your baby twice a day, after nursing at the first breast or before giving formula. For the first feedings, mix one to two teaspoons of cereal with formula or milk until it is thin and smooth. As a baby becomes accustomed to the texture, gradually increase the amount of cereal (and thickness) until your baby is getting two to four tablespoons of dry cereal each day. Adding sugar or honey is not recommended since they provide unnecessary calories and may cause a preference for sweet tastes. Never give honey before age one.

Strained Fruits

Begin feeding strained fruit after your baby has been fed cereal for at least five days. Choose plain, strained fruits like applesauce, peaches or mashed ripe bananas. Start with one teaspoon of fruit and gradually increase the amount to two to four tablespoons a day. Add only one new food at a time and wait for three to five days before introducing another.

Strained Vegetables

Feed your baby plain, strained green or yellow vegetables (after your baby has been fed cereal for at least five days). Choose carrots, squash, green beans or green peas. (Do not add salt or other seasonings.) Be sure to introduce your baby to many vegetables even if you don't like them yourself. Start with one teaspoon of vegetable and gradually increase the amount to three to five tablespoons a day. As with all new foods, remember to add only one new vegetable at a time, waiting three to five days before introducing another.

Other Cereals

Other plain infant cereals like oatmeal or barley can now be added to your baby's diet. To avoid possible allergic reactions, cereals containing wheat should not be fed to your baby until he/she is at least six months old. Cereals containing grain mixtures can be fed after your baby has tried each one separately.

Your Baby at Six to Seven Months

Strained Meats, Orange Juice, Zwieback Crackers

Feed your baby plain, unseasoned strained meats like beef, lamb, liver or chicken. These are better buys than dinners or high-meat dinners. Plain meats contain more protein and iron, the building materials for growth. Plain meats have a drier feel to a baby's tongue than the other foods he is used to. If he/she does not seem to "like" them, try mixing a small amount of formula, milk or plain vegetable with the meat.

Start with one teaspoon of meat and gradually increase the amount to two tablespoons a day. Be sure to introduce many kinds of meat to your baby, even if you do not like them yourself.

As with all new foods, add only one new meat to your baby's diet at a time, waiting three to five days and watching for signs of allergy, such as vomiting, wheezing, rash or diarrhea.

Choose fresh, frozen or unsweetened, canned orange juice. Pure juice is better for your baby's teeth than sugary orange juice drinks. Read the labels carefully.

When your baby starts to cut teeth he/she may like to practice chewing on hard, dry toast or zwieback crackers.

Your Baby at Seven to Nine Months

Finger Foods

When your baby has some teeth, it is time to start ground or mashed foods to help him/her learn how to chew. Either the junior baby foods or your family's meats and vegetables, well-cooked and mashed, can be used. If you use junior foods, remember that the plain meats are better for your baby than the dinners, high-meat dinners and casseroles.

Picking up and chewing small pieces of food is a learning experience your baby will enjoy at this age. Try offering small pieces of thin-sliced meat without skin or bones, cheese, cooked vegetables or canned fruit.

Your Baby at Nine to 12 Months

Soft Table Foods and Milk in a Cup

When your baby is about nine months old, he/she will probably be ready to try drinking from a small plastic cup or glass. Gradually increase the amount of liquid in the cup as your baby's ability to drink from it improves. Be patient! At first your baby may dribble more down his/her chin than he/she drinks.

At this age your baby may also have enough teeth to handle the consistency of coarser, chopped foods. These too provide another learning experience about foods. Try soft-cooked meats, or fruits and vegetables finely cut up or chopped with a food chopper.

At 10 to 12 months of age your baby will probably be ready to eat more of the foods that the rest of the family eats. It is best to avoid greasy, spicy or strong-flavored foods containing hot sauce, onion, garlic, mustard or catsup. These can be irritating to a young child's stomach.

Nutritious and Easy-To-Chew Table Foods

- Cheese cubes
- Cottage cheese
- Yogurt
- Cut-up soft fruits and vegetables
- Cut-up soft, tender meats, fish, chicken
- Hamburger
- Fish sticks
- Meatloaf
- Hot dishes

- Beans and rice
- Macaroni and cheese
- Homemade soup
- Small peanut butter or tunafish sandwiches
- Mashed potatoes
- Rice
- Soft enriched bread, noodles, spaghetti and/or macaroni

CAUTION: Avoid foods that may cause choking such as corn, unpeeled apples, raw vegetables such as carrots, celery and lettuce. Round foods such as hot dogs and grapes may also cause choking.

Foods that may cause allergic-like reactions (chocolate, shrimp and other shellfish) should be avoided as well.

Your baby will probably begin to show an interest in feeding himself/herself. Give baby a second spoon and let him/her try. This will be good practice for later self-feeding and will help keep up his/her interest in eating.

Vegetables and Fruits

Give your child four to five servings of fruit and vegetables each day. Be sure to give a Vitamin C fruit or juice (orange, grapefruit, or tomato) and a Vitamin A vegetable (carrots, squash, sweet potato greens).

- Fruit juices (fresh, frozen or canned)
 - ½ cup
 - orange, grapefruit, pineapple, grape, cranberry, tomato
- Fruits (canned)
 - ¼ to ½ cup
 - applesauce, fruit cocktail, peaches, pears, pineapple, pitted cherries, apricots

- Fruits (fresh)
 - Small piece or ¼ cup
 - peeled peach, pear, apple, nectarine, orange (without seeds and membrane), blueberries
- Vegetables
 - ¼ to ½ cup
 - carrots, squash, sweet potato, asparagus, greens, green beans

Whole Grain or Enriched Breads and Cereals

Give your child three to four servings of whole grain or enriched breads and/or cereals a day. They provide iron for blood building and healthy growth, B vitamins and energy.

- Whole grain or enriched bread
 - ½ slice, roll, biscuit
- Mashed or boiled potatoes
 - ¼ cup
 - 2 crackers
 - ½ cup hot or cold cereal

Your Child at One to Three Years

Eggs, Table Foods

Scrambled, poached and boiled eggs are easy to eat and are well liked by most children. Eggs are a good source of protein and can replace some of the meat in your child's diet. Since allergic-like reactions to eggs are not uncommon, watch your child closely for signs of allergy when he or she is first introduced to eggs.

Cereal can be an important source of iron in your child's diet if chosen carefully. Choose plain, unsugared, cooked or cold cereals (read the label).

Your child can now probably tolerate the extra roughage that whole grain breads and crackers provide. He/she will enjoy them as part of meals or as snacks.

Be patient as your child learns to feed himself/herself. In spite of the spills and mess, this learning experience and independence needs to be encouraged. Offer a variety of nutritious foods each day.

Three regular meals, with one or two nutritious snacks, will work for many children. Include two servings of meats or meat substitutes; three or four servings of milk products; four or five servings of fruits and vegetables (include a food rich in Vitamin C and Vitamin A); and three or four servings of whole grain or enriched breads, cereals, noodles or rice each day.

Additional Food Groups and Serving Sizes for Young Children

Milk and Milk Products

Milk products provide calcium and phosphorus to build strong bones and teeth. Give your child three or four servings of milk products a day.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole, 2 percent, or skim milk
- 1 slice mild cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cottage cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup yogurt

Meat and Meat Substitutes

Meat and meat substitutes provide protein to build muscle and body tissue as well as iron to build blood. Give your child two servings of these foods each day.

- 1-2 ounces lean meat, chicken, turkey, fish (without bones)
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup beans: navy, pinto, red, black-eyed peas
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup meat dishes, stews, casseroles
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cottage cheese
- 1 to 2 tablespoons peanut butter

Snacks Between Meals

Since children often get hungry between meals and at bedtime, snacks may be appreciated. They should not, however, be given too close to meal times. If your child does not eat well at meals, it may be best to avoid snacks.

If chosen with care, snacks can help your child meet his daily food needs. Low-nutrition, high-calorie foods such as candy, cookies, cakes, sweet drinks and potato chips should be limited. They may spoil your child's appetite for meals and encourage cavities. The longer you can delay giving these foods to your child, the better. Help your child learn to use sweets appropriately. Serve them occasionally at the end of meals and never as a bribe or a reward. Healthy snacks include:

- Cheese cubes and slices
- Milk
- Ice cream
- Yogurt with fruit
- Cottage cheese with fruit

- Strips of lean, soft, cooked meat
- Peanut butter and crackers
- Egg halves, hard boiled or deviled
- Slices of fresh or canned fruit
- Chilled fruit or vegetable juice
- Miniature tomatoes cut in quarters
- Dried fruit
- Frozen fruit juice “popsicles”
- Unsugared cereal with milk
- Graham crackers

Cholesterol

There is a continued concern about cholesterol and saturated fat in our diets and their relationship to heart disease. It is best not to avoid these fats in a baby’s diet during his first year or two. Breast milk, the food intended for babies, contains cholesterol. Some fat is necessary for healthy skin and brain development during early life.

Childhood Obesity

While it is essential for babies and children to be well nourished to grow and develop properly, overfeeding creates another set of problems. Childhood Obesity and type 2 diabetes are becoming epidemic in our country. These health concerns can create long lasting problems if they are not dealt with. The best “treatment” is prevention. Please talk to your doctor or nurse for further information.

When to Start Regular Cow’s Milk

Before starting your child on regular cow’s milk, talk with your doctor. We do not recommend starting regular cow’s milk feeding before 11 to 12 months of age or before your baby is taking a wide variety of all food groups.

Regular cow’s milk, two percent milk and/or, skim milk do not supply a balanced diet by themselves. They contain too much protein and salt, no iron, and insufficient amounts of copper and zinc. Your infant’s major organ systems are immature and are slowly growing in the first years of life, so you must accommodate developing systems until they have matured.

Skim milk should not be given during the first two years of life because it is deficient in the essential fatty acids needed for the development of the nervous system and brain.

When cow’s milk is started, choose whole milk. Wait until your baby is close to a year.