

# Healthy Eating for Babies Age 6 to 12 Months

## Breastmilk

- Breastmilk is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months
- Breastmilk protects against illness, and is recommended until age 2 years or older
- Non-breastfed babies should have store-bought iron-fortified infant formula until age 12 months

## Vitamin D

- Babies who are breastfed or partly breastfed need a vitamin D supplement 400 IU each day

*“Breastmilk is good for my baby”*



## When to start solid foods

- At about age 6 months

## How much food should baby eat?

- Let your baby decide how much to eat
- When your baby is full, she will shut her mouth, turn her head or push food away

## Tips for happy mealtimes

- Sit down and eat with your baby
- Let your baby decide whether to eat and how much to eat – never force
- Expect a mess – it’s normal!

## Which foods to start with

- Start with iron-rich foods at least 2 times each day, like meat, chicken, fish, baby cereal (iron-fortified), eggs, tofu, beans and lentils
- Babies enjoy and need texture – you do not need to purée their food

## When to try peanut butter and other allergens?

- You can introduce common food allergens (like egg, soy, seafood, wheat, sesame, peanut/nut butter and dairy) starting at age 6 months
- Introduce these foods one at a time, but there is no need to wait 2-3 days between each food
- If your baby tolerates these foods, keep offering them a few times each week – this may help prevent a food allergy from developing
- If your baby shows signs of allergy, stop offering the food and talk to your doctor
- If your baby has severe eczema or egg allergy, talk with your health care professional or call 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a dietitian

### More Information

- Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to talk with a Registered Dietitian
- [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating)
- Speak to your Doctor, Nurse or Dietitian
- Contact your local Health Unit:  
[www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-unit-locations](http://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-unit-locations)

## Dairy products and cow milk

- At age 6 months, babies can have full-fat unsweetened yogurt, cottage cheese and pasteurized cheeses
- When your baby is 9 to 12 months old and eating iron-rich foods every day, you can begin to offer pasteurized whole (homo) cow milk in a cup
- Wait until age 2 years to give your baby lower-fat cow milk (2%, 1% or skim)
- Plant-based drinks, like soy, almond, hemp or coconut drinks are not recommended until age 2 years
- Non-breastfed toddlers who don’t drink cow milk should be offered store-bought formula until age 2 years

## Not safe for baby

- ✗ Honey (including pasteurized or cooked)
- ✗ Raw sprouts like alfalfa or bean
- ✗ Unpasteurized juice, milk or cheese
- ✗ Uncooked deli meats like bologna or hot dogs
- ✗ Foods that can cause choking:
  - ✗ Hard, raw vegetables like carrots or celery
  - ✗ Popcorn, candies and marshmallows
  - ✗ Nuts, peanuts and large seeds
  - ✗ Globes of nut or seed butter
  - ✗ Whole grapes



# Healthy Eating for Babies Age 6 to 12 Months

## Age 6 Months

- Offer breastmilk or formula according to baby's hunger and fullness cues
- Offer solid foods 2 to 3 times each day
- Offer soft foods and finger foods like mashed, ground, lumpy or tender-cooked – foods do not need to be puréed
- Start with **iron-rich foods** and offer them at least 2 times each day:
  - Finely ground or chopped, well-cooked meat, chicken, or fish (remove bones)
  - Mashed, well-cooked egg
  - Mashed, cooked tofu, lentils, beans
  - Baby cereal (iron-fortified)
- Offer other healthy foods:
  - Mashed, cooked vegetables like sweet potato, squash or peas
  - Soft, mashed fruits like bananas, plums (remove skin and pit) or kiwis
  - Full-fat unsweetened yogurt or cottage cheese
  - Smooth peanut butter mixed with baby cereal or mashed fruit

### Water and Juice

- At 6 months, let your baby start learning to drink from an open cup – this helps baby develop muscles for talking.
- At 6 months, offer sips of water but don't let baby fill up on water. Water after eating helps to rinse food off baby's teeth.
- Babies do not need juice – it can harm their teeth and fill them up so they are not hungry for foods that help them grow.



*"My baby loves to feed herself"*

## Age 7 to 12 Months

- Offer breastmilk or formula according to your baby's hunger and fullness cues
- Work towards offering solid foods at 2-3 meals and 1-2 snacks each day, based on baby's appetite
- Include iron-rich foods at every meal
- Let baby try a variety of tastes and textures
- Offer mashed foods and small soft pieces of food that baby can eat with his fingers
- Give baby chances to feed himself with a spoon or fingers

### Protein Foods

- Finely chopped soft pieces of cooked meat, chicken, fish (remove bones) or shellfish
- Small, soft pieces of cooked tofu, eggs, beans, lentils
- Peanut or nut butter (spread thinly)
- Dairy products
  - Full-fat unsweetened yogurt or cottage cheese
  - Small pieces or grated hard cheese like cheddar
  - When baby is 9-12 months old and eating iron-rich foods every day, you can offer small amounts of pasteurized whole (homo) cow milk with meals

### Vegetables and Fruit

- Mashed cooked vegetables and soft fruits like yam, broccoli, berries, avocado
- Once baby eats mashed foods well, offer small, soft or shredded pieces like shredded apple

### Whole Grain Foods

- Baby cereal (iron-fortified)
- Cooked grains like rice, quinoa, oats
- Oat rings or rice crisp cereal
- Small pieces of toast, crackers or pasta

- Offer the same foods that the rest of the family is eating, unless they are not safe
- Avoid salty and sugary foods
- Babies can eat foods seasoned with herbs and spices



*"My baby likes to eat with me"*

### Let your baby decide how much to eat!

#### Parent's Jobs

- Offer solid foods 3-5 times each day
- Sit down and eat with your baby

#### Baby's Jobs

- Decide whether to eat and how much to eat