



# Baby's first foods

From birth to 12 months

For mums, dads, families and carers



Queensland  
Government

# What age do I give foods to my baby?

- **Until around 6 months old,** breast milk or baby formula is all your baby needs.
- **At around 6 months old,** but not before 4 months, start to give baby a variety of healthy foods. Start with iron-rich foods.





## **Should I keep breastfeeding if I give my baby food?**

Yes. At around 6 months, give your baby breast milk or infant formula followed by their first foods.

## **What if my baby was born preterm?**

If your baby was born preterm, you may need to talk to your health professional before giving your baby food.

*Please see your health professional often. This could mean your doctor, child health nurse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or multicultural health worker, or dietitian.*

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**What age do I give foods to my baby?**

# How do I know my baby is ready for foods?

When your baby is around 6 months old, they will show you signs that they are ready for their first foods.



Baby must be able to hold their head up by themselves and sit up with support (e.g. on your lap or in a high chair).



Other signs to look for:



Is your baby picking toys up and bringing them to their mouth?



Is your baby reaching for food and getting excited when watching you and your family eating?



Is your baby opening their mouth when food or a spoon touches their lips?



*If your baby is around 6 months old and having trouble starting their first foods, talk to your health professional.*

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How do I know my baby is ready for foods?

# How much food do I give my baby?

**Meal times are fun and can be messy.  
Give baby time to enjoy the smell and feel of food.**

- At around 6 months, give your baby their breastfeed or infant formula followed by their first foods.
- At the start, offer only a small amount of food.
- Start with one meal per day when baby is most hungry. Slowly build up to 3 times a day.
- By 12 months aim to offer 5 small meals over the day, with breastfeed or milk offered afterwards.
- Every baby will eat different amounts.

**To grow healthy eating habits, do not force feed your baby or use food as a reward or bribe.**



## Did you know

- Baby will show signs when they have had enough. They might look sleepy, turn their head or close their mouth.
- Family meal time is important. Your baby will learn how to eat and enjoy meals by watching you and others.
- TV and mobile phones distract babies. Turn them off.
- Your baby's bowel motions (poo) will change when you give them their first foods. If you are worried, talk to your health professional.



*Always stay with your baby when they are eating to make sure that they are safe and do not choke.*

**How much food do I give my baby?**

# What foods do I give my baby?

**Offer baby a wide variety of healthy foods.**

You can try them in any order.

**Include iron-rich foods every day to help baby grow well,** such as lean meat and legumes, baby cereal with iron, green leafy vegetables.

## **Lean meats and legumes (iron-rich):**

beef, lamb, pork, goat, kangaroo, eggs, bush meats, chicken, fish, tofu, chickpeas, canned beans, nut pastes.

**Vegetables:** avocado, sweet potato, pumpkin, taro, yam, broccoli, cucumber, cabbage, spinach.





**Fruit:** banana, pear (peeled), paw paw, watermelon, kiwi fruit, oranges, stewed apple.



**Grains and cereals:** rice, plain noodles, pasta, bread, damper, wraps, oats, polenta, baby cereal with iron.

**Yoghurt and cheese.**

**For a healthy baby, offer a variety of foods and follow their hunger cues.**  
Your baby only has a small tummy and it can fill up fast.

*Choose first foods with different colours, textures, smells and flavours.  
Your baby may need to try a new food many times before they like it.*

**What foods do I give my baby?**

# How do I prepare my baby's food?

## At around 6 months old

Start with soft and smooth foods. Make food more lumpy as baby grows.

- Foods should be well cooked.

Smooth



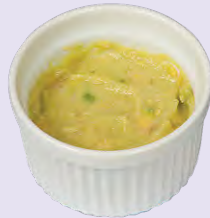
Mashed



Soft foods and  
finger foods



Blended meat  
and veggies



Mashed avocado and  
scrambled eggs



Tuna, tomato  
and veggies

## At around 8 months old

Start to give your baby finger foods to hold. They may need your help at the start.



- Your baby is still learning to chew.  
Make sure the finger foods are soft so your baby does not choke.



Soft cooked



Well cooked



Soft cooked

## At around 12 months old

Family foods are best to give your baby.

- Your baby can be eating the same foods as the rest of the family.  
Help your baby by cutting up the meal.



**Pasta bake:**  
mince, pasta,  
tomato, carrot,  
zucchini, basil



**Mince and  
vegetables:**  
mince, broccoli,  
carrot, potato,  
spinach

*If you are worried about how much your baby is eating or want more tips on how to prepare your baby's food, talk to your health professional.*

# What about baby food bought from the shops?

**Baby food in jars, cans and squeeze pouches should not be the only food you give your baby.**

- They are okay to give your baby sometimes.
- They do not give your baby a variety of colours, textures, flavours and smells like home-made food can.
- Use a spoon whenever you can.

If you buy baby food from the shops, choose baby foods with vegetables and meats.

Avoid desserts, custards and fruit bars. They are high in sugar and low in iron.



**Home-made food can be healthier for your baby and is often cheaper than baby food in jars or pouches.**



**Using spoons, forks, fingers and cups helps healthy eating skills grow.**

*If you need help choosing the right foods and reading food labels, ask your health professional.*

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**What about baby food bought from the shops?**

# What drinks do I give my baby?

## Until around 6 months old

- Breast milk or baby formula is the only drink that your baby needs.



## From around 6 months old

- Keep giving your baby breast milk or infant formula.
- Do not give cow's milk as a drink until baby is 12 months old. Small amounts can be added to food (e.g. mashed potato).
- Offer small amounts of cooled boiled water. Increase the amount as baby grows.
- Try using a cup.



At first they will need 2 hands and there will be some spills!

## After 12 months old

- Offer clean tap water every day.
- Continue to give breast milk for as long as you and baby want.



- Baby can start having full fat cow's milk as a drink.
- Baby does not need 'toddler milks'.
- Talk to your health professional before giving other milks like oat, almond, coconut or rice milk.



## What do I avoid giving to my baby?

- Do not give sugary drinks. They can rot your baby's teeth and lead to an unhealthy weight.
  - This includes fruit juice, 'baby' juice, cordial, soft drink, sport or energy drinks, flavoured milk, condensed milk.
- Do not give a bottle or cup to your baby in bed and never prop baby up with a bottle or cup. It is unsafe and baby may choke.
- Never add food to a bottle. Talk to your health professional if you need advice.



*Did you know babies can only have low or reduced fat milks from the age of 2 years?*

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What drinks do I give my baby?

# What foods do I avoid giving my baby?

## Some foods are unsafe for your baby and can make them choke

- Do not give popcorn, whole sausages, sausage skin, whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, marshmallows, pieces of uncooked apples or carrot and other hard foods.
- Do not give whole nuts, which can include cashews, macadamia nuts, peanuts, almonds, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, and nut bars.

## Do not give honey

- Honey is not good for babies under 12 months old. It may lead to botulism, which can make your baby very sick.



**Food has lots of natural flavour. You do not need to add salt, sugar or sauces to baby's foods to make them tastier.**



**Sauces can have a lot of added salt.** They are not good to give to your baby. Avoid:

- Soy, ready-made sauces like pasta, curry, stir-fry, tomato or BBQ sauces.
- Gravy mixes and stock cubes or liquids, instant soups and noodles.



**Too much sugar** is bad for your baby. It can rot their teeth and lead to an unhealthy weight.



**Too much salt** is bad for your baby's kidneys and heart.



## What about fat?

- Some high fat foods are bad for your baby's heart and lead to an unhealthy weight.
- Cut the fat and skin off meats and chicken.



*If you are not sure what foods to give your baby, ask your health professional.*

**What foods do I avoid giving my baby?**

# How do I keep my baby's food safe?

**Food safety is important for the whole family. Babies can get very sick, very quickly.**

**Always wash your hands before and after making food for your baby and family.**

## **Preparing food safely**

- Wash all fruits and vegetables.
- Keep raw meats away from other foods. Use a separate cutting board for raw meats, chicken, fish and seafood.
- Cook all foods really well
  - Make sure meats are not pink.
  - Make sure seafood is well cooked.
  - Cook eggs until the white is completely set and the yolk begins to thicken.
- Remove all bones from meats, chicken, fish and seafood. Check for small bones with your finger.



**Try your baby's food first to make sure it is not too hot. Never share your spoon with your baby. It can spread germs.**

## Storing food safely

- Use leftovers within 2 days. Only reheat baby's food once and throw the rest away.
- Make sure raw meats, chicken and seafood are not dripping on other foods in the fridge.
- Put all ready-to-eat food in a sealed container in the fridge or freezer. Make sure cooked food has stopped steaming first.
- If you do not have a fridge, store food in an esky with ice and close well.

## Mum, Dad, family and carers:

- Check the expiry date of food being used.
- Always wash your hands before and after feeding your baby.
- Have clean kitchen benches.
- Wash up with hot, soapy water. Rinse with clean water and air dry.
- Follow instructions for sterilising bottles.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen.

### Freezer

#### Bread

(3 Months)

#### Raw Meat

(2–4 Months)

Place in the fridge the day before cooking to defrost.

**Milk**  
(5–7 Days)



**Cooked Foods**  
(2–3 Days)

**Meat**  
(3–4 Days)

**Eggs**  
(3–4 Weeks)

**Fruit and Vegetables**  
(3–4 Days)

Ask your health professional for bottle sterilising methods and food safety tips.

# Other frequently asked questions

## **What about foods that may cause an allergy?**

- Current advice is to give your baby their first foods not too early or not too late. Give your baby their first foods at around 6 months old, but not before 4 months.
- You can give your baby different foods in any order, including smooth nut pastes, cooked seafood and cooked whole eggs from around 6 months old.

## **Can I give my baby peanut butter and other nut spreads?**

- You can give your baby smooth peanut butter and other nut or seed spreads from around 6 months old.
- Choose natural spreads with no added salt or sugar.

## **Can I give my baby egg, and should I give them the yolk or white section of the egg?**

- You can give your baby cooked, whole eggs from around 6 months old.
- Cook eggs until the white is completely set and the yolk begins to thicken. Do not give raw eggs or any food that contains raw eggs. This includes deep-fried or home-made ice-cream, or mayonnaise.

## **Is seafood and fish okay for my baby and when should it be given?**

- Seafood is safe for most babies. You can give seafood to your baby from around 6 months old. Make sure you remove all the bones first.

**Do not restrict or limit your baby's food unless told to by your health professional.**



## **What about mercury in fish?**

- Many types of fish contain mercury. These fish can include swordfish, shark (flake), tuna or barramundi.
- Too much mercury is bad for your baby's growth and development.
- This means that your baby can only have fish that contains mercury sometimes (no more than once per week).

## **Can I add spices, herbs, and salt to my baby's meals?**

- Spices and herbs are okay to add to your baby's meal in small amounts.
- Do not add any salt to your baby's meals. Some ready-made spice mixtures may be high in salt. Do not add them to your baby's meals.

## **What about baby-led weaning?**

- It is a way of giving first foods by simply letting your baby feed themselves.
- Talk to your health professional before trying baby-led weaning.
- You should never leave your baby alone while they are eating. Stay with your baby to make sure that they are safe and do not choke.

*Talk to your health professional if you have questions about giving your baby their first foods.*

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Other frequently asked questions including allergy prevention

# Where do I find help and advice?

## **13 HEALTH**

Mum, dad, family and carers can call 13 HEALTH about any health concerns you have for you or your baby. Ask for a child health nurse.

[www.health.qld.gov.au/13health/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/13health/)

## **Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)**

This helpline and website provides mum, dad, family and carers with practical mum-to-mum support and breastfeeding information.

Call: 1800 686 268 or

[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

## **Australian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)**

This website provides helpful information on allergies, including food allergies.

[www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au)

## **Child Health Information: Your guide to the first 12 months**

This booklet provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers on the first 12 months of your baby's life. It can be found in the Queensland Health 'Personal Health Record' book or online.

[www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/PDF/brochures/child-health-information-book.pdf](http://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/PDF/brochures/child-health-information-book.pdf)

## **Eat for Health**

This website provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers about what your family and your baby should be eating every day. It also includes breastfeeding advice for mums.

[www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)

## **Nip Allergies in the Bub**

This is an allergy prevention website and provides information for common allergy causing foods and introducing solid foods.

[www.preventallergies.org.au](http://www.preventallergies.org.au)

## **Raising Children Network**

This website provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers on different topics, including nutrition for your baby's and family's health.

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

## **Notes**

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For further information and additional resources, please contact the Centre for Children’s Health and Wellbeing, Level 9, 199 Grey Street, South Brisbane, Queensland, 4101, email [CCHW@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:CCHW@health.qld.gov.au), or search “Children’s Health Queensland Baby’s First Foods”. For permissions beyond the scope of this licence contact: Intellectual Property Officer, Queensland Health, PO BOX 2368, Fortitude Valley BC, QLD 4006, email [ip\\_officer@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:ip_officer@health.qld.gov.au), phone (07) 3328 9862.

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- Wide Bay HHS

**WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this resource may contain images of deceased persons.**

