



# Wee Learn

## Wee Beginners (0-18 months): Feeding Your Baby In The First Year



Feeding your baby in the first year of life is an exciting adventure for parents and babies alike. It's about development, nutrition, curiosity, sharing and learning. Attachment also grows as you go about your daily routine with your baby.

You can help your baby develop a lifetime of healthy eating habits with the right start.

### The first 6 months

- Breast milk has the right amount and quality of nutrients to suit your baby's first food needs and is easiest on her digestive system, so there's less chance of constipation or diarrhea.
- Breast milk also contains antibodies and other immune factors that help your baby prevent and fight off illness.

If breastfeeding is not an option, use a store-bought iron-fortified infant formula for the first 9 to 12 months.

- Formula should be cow milk-based. Soy, rice or other plant-based beverages, even when fortified, are not appropriate as they are nutritionally incomplete for infants. There is no evidence that soy-based formula will prevent your child from developing an allergy.
- Soy-based infant formulas should only be used as an alternative to cow milk-based formula if your baby has galactosemia or if your baby cannot consume dairy-based products for cultural or religious reasons.
- Talk to your doctor if you are unsure which formula is best for your child.

### Introducing solid foods

At about 6 months, most babies are ready for other foods. Along with other foods, you can continue to breastfeed until your baby is 2 years and beyond. You'll know baby is ready to start other foods when he:

- Can sit up without support and has good control of his neck muscles.



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- Can sit up without support and has good control of his neck muscles.
- Holds food in his mouth without pushing it out on his tongue right away.
- Shows interest in food when others are eating.
- Opens his mouth when he sees food coming his way.
- Can let you know he doesn't want food by leaning back or turning his head away.

Remember that all babies are different. Some babies may be ready a few weeks before or just after 6 months. However, waiting too long after 6 months to introduce other foods increases your baby's risk of iron deficiency.

### **What foods should we start introducing our baby to first?**

There are many ways to introduce solid food. The first foods usually vary from culture to culture and from family to family.

- Start with foods that contain iron, which babies need for many different aspects of their development. Meat, poultry, cooked egg yolk and well-cooked legumes (beans, lentils, chick peas) are good sources of iron. Store-bought iron-fortified infant cereals such as rice or barley are also common first foods because they are good sources of iron.
- There is no special order to introduce new foods to your baby.
- When introducing foods that are common food allergens, try offering no more than one per day. Wait two days before you introduce another. This makes it easier to identify a food that may have caused a reaction.

Healthy foods that your whole family is eating are the best choice for your baby. Make sure they are plain, with no added salt, sugar or spices. You can use commercial baby foods but read the label to ensure there is no added salt or sugar.





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### **How much should I feed my baby?**

Follow your baby's cues for how much to feed them. Start by offering a teaspoon or two. Don't rush. Some babies need to try a food many times before accepting it. If she's not hungry, she'll turn her head and close her mouth. If she's hungry, she'll get excited and open. Never trick or coax her to eat more by playing games or offering sweetened foods. Babies who can follow their own hunger cues are much less likely to overeat later in life. Try foods with different tastes and textures to help your baby learn how to handle foods in her mouth.

### **Water and juice**

Babies who are exclusively breastfed don't need extra water. When your baby begins to eat other foods, you can start to offer water occasionally.

- Babies and children don't need to drink juice. Too much juice can also cause early childhood tooth decay.
- Offer water to babies and young children between meals and snacks if they are thirsty. If you choose to offer juice, be sure it is only 100% fruit juice. Always offer it in an open cup, and as part of a meal or snack. Limit juice to 125 mL (4 oz.) per day.

### **Are there any foods my baby shouldn't eat?**

- Babies shouldn't be offered sugary drinks or foods, such as candies, soda/pop or energy drinks.
- Don't give honey to babies under 1 year old, as there is a risk of infant botulism (food poisoning).
- If you have concerns, please speak to your health care provider

Abridged from <https://bit.ly/2qrWYb5>

