



## Ready to eat!

Babies' growth, development and nutrition needs vary in each stage of infancy. At six months of age, most babies are ready to begin eating solid foods of soft consistency.

### Signs your baby is ready to start solids:

- Baby can sit alone with little support
- He/she holds head steady and straight
- They will open their mouths when they see food coming
- The tongue will be kept low and flat to receive the spoon
- He/she will close lips over the spoon and pull food off the spoon
- Tongue thrust reflex diminishes, baby can keep food in mouth rather than pushing it back out with the tongue
- Turns away when full

Always begin feeding solids with a spoon. This helps jaw and muscle development that contributes to speech development.

Once solid foods are added to the diet, only one new food at a time should be fed for 3-5 days before introducing another food. This method of slowly introducing foods will help identify foods that baby may be allergic to. If baby has an allergic reaction to a food, remove that food from the diet until a later time when the food can be reintroduced. Most food allergies are outgrown by age 5.

### Reactions to a food allergy can include the following symptoms:

- Hives (red spots that look like mosquito bites)
- Itchy skin rashes
- Breathing problems, sneezing, congestion, wheezing, tight throat
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Pale skin, light-headedness, or drop in heart rate

# Infant Nutrition

6–12 Months



## Food Basics:

There is no reason to offer food in a certain order. Solid foods include infant cereal, meat, vegetables, and fruits that have the right consistency for baby. Baby's first foods should be single ingredient foods that are nutritious and have a smooth and thin texture. Baby should be eating from all food groups by 7–8 months of age.

Older babies need more food and as he eats more, breastfeeding and formula intake will decrease. Between 8–12 months old, baby should eat a wide variety of food and textures. Also, your baby will start to pick up food with fingers and put into mouth. Smile and talk to your baby, and don't worry about messiness. It is important for learning that baby be allowed to play with food a time or two each day.

## Eating Safely:

- Do not leave baby alone when eating. Always sit baby in an upright position and feed slowly.
- Avoid using teething pain relief medicine before mealtime because it can interfere with chewing and swallowing.
- Watch out for choking hazards: cut round foods such as carrots into small strips instead of round coins. Grapes, cherries, berries, melon balls and cherry tomatoes should be cut into quarters. Remove seeds from fruits and vegetables.
- Serve ground meat instead of hotdogs, chunks of meat or tough meat.
- Serve cheese that is shredded, or cut into small strips instead of chunks.
- Serve thin, smooth peanut butter or other nut butters on toast or crackers to prevent the nut butters from sticking to the roof of a baby's mouth and cause choking.
- Do not feed hard candy, popcorn, nuts, dried fruit or seeds.
- Avoid using sugar, honey, salt, or added fat to baby's food.
- Wash baby food jar tops prior to opening. Never feed from a jar. Put a small amount

from the jar into a small bowl to feed baby. Seal and refrigerate jar until next feeding.

## Weaning:

Weaning from the breast or bottle is a gradual process. The decision to wean from the breast to a cup or bottle is an individual one and should be left up to the mother.

Learning to drink from a cup should begin when baby is able to sit up without support and is eating solid foods. Babies usually start drinking from a cup at 7 months and should be completely weaned from the bottle by his/her first birthday. Waiting too long makes it harder on baby and the family. Normal, healthy babies should not be using a bottle after 14 months of age. To begin the process, give baby a cup to play with at 6 months of age.

## Successful weaning:

- Choose a feeding that baby is least interested in (such as late afternoon) and offer a cup instead of the bottle. Hold the cup for the baby for the early weeks of weaning.
- Continue with using a cup at this feeding for a week or two and then add a cup at another feeding.
- The bedtime or early morning bottle is usually the most difficult to wean because baby is tired and does not want any changes. To help the baby feel secure, have a favorite toy or blanket on hand when feeding the bottle. Then when the bottle is removed, the baby will still have the toy or blanket for comfort.
- Offer only breast milk, formula or water in a cup. Avoid sweetened beverages and if juice is provided, use only 1–2 ounces.
- Be patient and provide lots of affection and attention instead of a bottle at bedtime.
- Offer a small snack and beverage from a cup near bedtime.
- Put a small amount of water in the bottle instead of milk or formula.



## Suggested Meal Plan\*

	6 months	7–8 months	9–12 months
Breakfast	6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula	6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula	4–6 tbsp. infant cereal 2–4 tbsp. soft diced fruit 4–6 oz. of breast milk or infant formula
Snack	1–2 tbsp. plain pureed meat	2 tbsp. single grain cereal mixed with breast milk or formula 1 tbsp. pureed fruit	2 oz. water in a cup 2–4 tbsp. yogurt 2–4 tbsp. soft fruit
Lunch	6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula	6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula	2–4 tbsp. ground or minced meat 2–4 tbsp. cooked vegetables 4–6 oz. of breast milk or infant formula
Snack	1–2 tbsp. single grain infant cereal mixed with breast milk or formula	2 tbsp. pureed vegetables 2 tbsp. yogurt	Whole grain toast strips Thin smear of smooth peanut butter 2 oz. of water in a cup 6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula
Dinner	6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula	1–2 tbsp. pureed meat 2 tbsp. cereal 2 tbsp. pureed vegetables 6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula	2–4 tbsp. ground or minced meat 2–4 tbsp. cooked vegetables 2–4 tbsp. cooked brown rice or whole wheat pasta 6–8 oz. of breast milk or infant formula

\*This suggestion is only a guide; babies may eat more or less than these amounts.