Do not offer babies coffee or sugar sweetened Caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks:

- supervision by a health professional.

Under 12 months. Calcium enriched soy, rice and oat milks (2-2.5% fat) are not an appropriate source of nutrition for babies (e.g. soy, rice, oat, coconut, and almond milks are

Plant-based milks:

- Cow’s Milk:
  - 12 months. Use breastmilk or infant formula.
  - Is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Full cream cow’s milk can be offered from 12 months.
  - After 2 years of age children can drink reduced fat cow’s milk.

- Fisher milk:
  - Is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Eating whole fruit is recommended.
  - From 12 months full cream cow’s milk can be offered from a cup.

- Nut milks:
  - From 2 years of age children can drink reduced fat nut milks.

Fruit juice:

- Contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.

- Honey:
  - Can have bacteria in it which can cause severe illness (botulism) in infants under 12 months old.

- Nut pastes/spreads

- Eggs:
  - Cooked egg (yolk & white)

- Meat:

- Fish:

- Soy:
  - Soy, rice, oat, coconut, and almond milks are not an appropriate source of nutrition for babies under 12 months. Calcium enriched soy, rice and oat beverages can be used after 12 months if under supervision by a health professional.

- Legumes/Beans:

- Caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks:

- Do not offer babies coffee or sugar sweetened drinks (e.g. soft drinks, cordials, energy drinks).

- For further information:

  - Early Childhood Health Centres:
    - For centre locations throughout NSW, consult your local white/yellow pages or whitepages.com.au under the heading ‘Community Health Centre’ or ‘Early Childhood Health Centre’.
  - Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA):
    - Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268
    - www.breastfeeding.asn.au
  - Tresillian 24-hour Parents Helpline:
    - (02) 9787 0855 or 1300 272 736
    - (freetext outside Sydney metropolitan area)
    - www.tresillian.net/
  - Karitane Care Line:
    - 1300 227 464
    - www.karitane.org.au
  - Mothersafe: Medications in Pregnancy and Lactation Service:
    - Phone: (02) 9382 6539 or 1800 647 848
    - (freetext outside Sydney metropolitan area)
  - Personal Health Record (known as the ‘Blue Book’):
    - www.health.nsw.gov.au
  - Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA):
    - Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268
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1. WHY WAIT UNTIL AROUND 6 MONTHS BEFORE INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS?

Both the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement (2011) recommend introducing solid foods at around 6 months. There are no benefits to introducing solid foods before this time.

Introducing solid foods too early can cause problems such as:
- increased risk of food allergies
- decreased breastmilk production
- increased exposure to germs
- increased load on your baby’s kidneys
- constipation, from poor digestion

If you feel your baby needs to start solids before 6 months of age, contact your local Child and Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner. See 9. ‘Further information’.

2. THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN FIRST INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS

As long as iron-rich foods are included, first foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits your baby. See ‘Around 6 months’ for information about iron-rich foods.

Breast or bottle-feed your baby first. Breastmilk or formula is still the most important part of your baby’s diet.

At first, solid foods are extras and new tastes for your baby.

Many babies will only eat a tiny amount to start with (less than ½ teaspoon). Others may want more.

Mothers often find that a good time of day to start is when baby is not too tired or too hungry.

Avoid nutrient poor foods with high levels of saturated fat, sugar, or salt (e.g. cakes, biscuits, confectionery and potato chips).

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

Babies can easily get sick from food poisoning:
- Wash hands with warm running water and soap before preparing food for your baby or feeding your baby.
- Clean food preparation areas before and after preparing food. Use clean utensils.
- If preparing formula, sterilise bottles and other equipment.
- Wash fruit and vegetables well—even vegetables marketed for babies (e.g. baby custard/yoghurt/pureed fruit) offer no nutritional advantage over regular products.

Introducing solid foods too early can cause problems such as:
- To avoid giving them nuts, small hard foods (such as raw or undercooked pieces of hard fruit and vegetables, popcorn, rice cakes and cocktailFrankfurts) and small slippery foods (such as whole grapes and whole cherry tomatoes).

If using water to mix with baby foods, boil and cool it first. After heating food, always mix it thoroughly and test its temperature before offering it to your baby.

Eating safely

As babies are more likely to choke on food than an adult, it is important:
- to watch them while they are eating
- not to let them move around while they are eating
- to use a safety harness when your baby is in a high chair or low chair
- to avoid giving them nuts, small hard foods (such as raw or undercooked pieces of hard fruit and vegetables, popcorn, rice cakes and cocktail Frankfurts) and small slippery foods (such as whole grapes and whole cherry tomatoes).

Fussy eaters

Almost all babies will learn to accept family foods if they are offered in a positive, friendly way. If you have any concerns, check with your Local Child and Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner.

4. FINGER FOODS

Babies will begin to actively explore their world and therefore this is a great time to take advantage of their natural interest in food.

To help your baby learn to eat family foods, it is important he or she practice. Offer an increasing variety of foods, presented in different sizes and textures. Discovering, feeling and eating by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm soapy water first.

Suggestions

1. Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot circles, zucchini strips, beans, peas or slices of beetroot.

Hard vegetables need to be well cooked and offered as large chunks.

2. Raw foods – whole small banana, tomato slices, a small or large chunk of fruit.

3. Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing or small thin pieces to be picked up with the thumb and forefinger.

- Remember eating needs to be a safe and enjoyable activity.
- Always remain with your baby while they are eating.
- Eating is a social occasion.
- Eating healthy meals together provides the best example for your baby.

For more information about giving finger foods, talk to a Child and Family Health Nurse.

5. COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS

These can be useful, but:

- They are more expensive than home cooked foods.

They may look, taste and smell different from family foods and so don’t help babies learn about the foods that the rest of the family eats.

When they are used often, babies may become so used to them that they are reluctant to change to family foods.

Regular use of ‘squidge’ food pouches limits the variety of food texture and learning about food (look, smell and feel). The regular sucking of food can cause teeth to decay and affect speech development.

Home prepared food can be just as convenient. Individual food can be cooked, mashed and then frozen in ice cube trays.

Many food products marketed for babies (e.g. baby custard/yoghurt/pureed fruit) offer no nutritional advantage over regular products.

6. WHAT ELSE?

Sleep

It is common for children to wake once or twice a night even into their second year. There is no evidence to support the idea that introducing solids early will help your baby sleep longer at night.

Weight

Some people may think that small babies need to start solids early to help them gain weight more quickly. Others may think that large babies need to start solids early in order to keep growing well. Breastmilk provides all the nutrients a healthy baby needs for around the first 6 months of life whatever their size.

How much food?

Babies are individuals. Some babies eat enthusiastically and others will take longer to want more than just a little. If you continue to offer a variety of healthy foods, your baby will eat to their ‘appetite’. Remember milk is still a very important food for babies for at least the first 12 months.

Fussy eaters

Almost all babies will learn to accept family foods if they are offered in a positive, friendly way. If you have any concerns, check with your Local Child and Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner.