7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

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

Nuts: Babies can choke on nuts and similar hard foods. Include nuts and nut pastes and spreads can be offered from 6 months.

Milk: There is no particular order advised for the introduction of solid foods or rate that new foods should be introduced, as long as iron rich foods are introduced first. There is no particular order advised for the introduction of solid foods or rate that new foods should be introduced, as long as iron rich foods are introduced first. If allergies are a problem in your family seek advice from a health professional.

Low fat and reduced fat milks: Are not recommended for children under 2 years. After 2 years of age children can drink reduced fat milks (2-2.5% fat). After 5 years of age children can drink low fat and reduced fat milks.

Plant-based milks: Including goat’s and sheep’s milk is not suitable due to protein content that is different to cow’s milk. These milks (2-2.5% fat). After 5 years of age children can drink low fat and reduced fat milks.

Cow’s Milk: Is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Eating whole milk is recommended.

Milk from other animal sources: Include goat’s and sheep’s milk may need to be offered in small amounts on occasions of unusual symptoms or feeding difficulties. This may help to build up a tolerance to the milk protein. Mothers can choose to continue breastfeeding or to wean, whichever is best for you and your baby.

8. ALLERGIES

There is no particular order advised for the introduction of solid foods or rate that new foods should be introduced, as long as iron rich foods are introduced first. If allergies are a problem in your family seek advice from a health professional.

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
(Freecall 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
(Freecall outside Sydney metropolitan area)

Personal Health Record (known as the ‘Blue Book’): www.health.nsw.gov.au

Healthy Kids website: www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

References:

• Infant Feeding Guidelines NHMRC 2012
• Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement WHO 2011
• Australian Dietary Guidelines NHMRC 2013

FOR PARENTS OF 0 TO 12 MONTH OLD BABIES

Starting Family Foods

Introducing your baby to solid foods

FOR PARENTS OF 0 TO 12 MONTH OLD BABIES
Introducing your baby's first foods

BIRTH TO AROUND 6 MONTHS

Breastmilk or infant formula only

Developmental Stage
Can suck and swallow milk

Formula fed babies only may need to be offered cooled boiled water at times of heat stress (such as hot weather or fever).

See 1. Why Wait Until Six Months before Introducing Solids?

AROUND 6 MONTHS

Continue breastmilk or infant formula.

Breastmilk remains an important source of nutrients, immunological support and comfort beyond 6 months.

Small amounts of cooled boiled water may be offered in a cup.

Developmental Stage
- Stronger suck
- Shows interest in food
- Begins chewing
- Can swallowing solids

At around 6 months most babies will be able to manage a variety of textures. Some babies will prefer to start with soft foods (mashed or grated) from a spoon and others will prefer to start with finger foods such as steak strips and cut up fruit.

As long as iron-rich foods (*) are included in first foods, foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits your baby.

First foods to include:
- Iron-enriched rice cereal*
- Minced, stewed or grated meat, poultry & liver (cook, freeze then grate)*
- Fish
- Cooked legumes, tofu and tempeh*
- Cooked vegetables (e.g. carrot, potato, pumpkin)
- Fruit (e.g. apple, banana, pear, melon)

Until 12 months cow’s milk should only be used in small amounts to mix with family foods and in cooking.

FROM 12 MONTHS

Continue breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby want to keep going.

Breastfeeding continues to provide health benefits in your baby's second year of life and beyond.

Developmental Stage
- Developed chewing movement
- Jaw control

From 12 months full cream cow's milk can be offered from a cup. If you want your baby to grow up on a plant-based diet (vegan diet) continue breastfeeding for as long as possible and consult a dietitian for advice regarding iron and B12 supplementation.

Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

A variety of nutritious foods from the Five Food Groups is recommended.
FOR PARENTS OF 0 TO 12 MONTH OLD BABIES

Introducing your baby

To solid foods

Starting Family Foods

BIRTH TO AROUND 6 MONTHS

Breastmilk or infant formula only

Breastmilk provides adequate fluid up to around 6 months.

Developmental Stage

Can suck and swallow milk.

Formula fed babies only may need to be offered cooled boiled water at times of heat stress (such as hot weather or fever).

See 1. Why Wait Until Around Six Months before Introducing Solid Foods?

AROUND 6 MONTHS

Continue breastmilk or infant formula.

Breastmilk remains an important source of nutrients, immunological support and comfort beyond 6 months.

Small amounts of cooled boiled water may be offered in a cup.

Developmental Stage

Stronger suck

Puking

Chewing developing

Clearing spoon with lips

Interested in feeding self

At around 6 months most babies will be able to manage a variety of textures. Some babies will prefer to start with soft foods (mashed or grated) from a spoon and others will prefer to start with finger foods such as steak strips and cut up fruit.

As long as iron-rich foods (*) are included in first foods, foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits your baby.

First foods to include:

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Until 12 months cow’s milk should only be used in small amounts to mix with family foods and in cooking.

FROM 12 MONTHS

Continue breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby want to keep going.

Breastfeeding continues to provide health benefits in your baby’s second year of life and beyond.

Developmental Stage

Developed chewing movement

Jaw control

Most children should be eating family foods and drinking from a cup by 12 months.

From 12 months full cream cow’s milk can be offered from a cup.

If you want your baby to grow up on a plant-based diet (vegan diet) continue breastfeeding for as long as possible and consult a dietitian for advice regarding iron and B12 supplementation.

Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

A variety of nutritious foods from the Five Food Groups is recommended.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

• Australian Dietary Guidelines NHMRC 2013
• Infant Feeding Guidelines NHMRC 2012
• Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement WHO 2011

8. ALLERGIES

If allergies are a problem in your family seek advice from a health professional. The following foods are more commonly associated with allergies in babies: milk, eggs, seafood/fish, nuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy and wheat. There is no need to avoid these foods from the time of birth.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information contact the Better Health Australia website at www.betterhealth.gov.au or call 1300 360 625.

• Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

10. APPENDIX

Developmental Stage

Breastfeeding continues to provide health benefits in your baby’s second year of life and beyond.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Developmental Stage

From 12 months full cream cow’s milk can be offered from a cup.

If you want your baby to grow up on a plant-based diet (vegan diet) continue breastfeeding for as long as possible and consult a dietitian for advice regarding iron and B12 supplementation.

Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

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If you want your baby to grow up on a plant-based diet (vegan diet) continue breastfeeding for as long as possible and consult a dietitian for advice regarding iron and B12 supplementation.

Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

A variety of nutritious foods from the Five Food Groups is recommended.
Fruit juice: 

- Contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.
- Use of fruit juice is not recommended due to lack of evidence on their nutritional benefits and reduction in the intake of breastmilk or infant formula.
- Babies can develop digestive problems, such as diarrhea, gas and abdominal discomfort.
- Do not offer fruit juice to babies under 12 months.
- Offered fruit juice may encourage self-soothing and may delay feeding.

Nuts: 

- Babies can choke on nuts and similar hard foods.
- Nuts are not recommended for children under 2 years.
- Contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.
- There is no evidence to suggest that nuts can help in reducing the risk of developing allergies in children.
- Do not offer nuts to babies under 12 months.
- Avoid offering nuts in a powdered or paste form.

Honey: 

- Contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.
- Honey is not recommended for babies under 12 months as it may contain Clostridium botulinum, a bacteria that can cause botulism in infants under 12 months old.
- Do not offer honey to babies under 12 months.

Caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks: 

- Contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.
- Do not offer babies coffee or sugar sweetened drinks.
- Contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.
- Include water, milk and nutritionally balanced milk alternatives, mostly reduced fat, with the majority wholegrain.

Plant-based milks: 

- Are not recommended for children under 2 years.
- Most children can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).
- After 2 years of age children can drink reduced fat milks (2-2.5% fat).
- After 5 years of age children can drink reduced fat or low fat milks.

Milk from other animal sources: 

- Include milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat, with the majority wholegrain.
- Including goat’s and sheep’s milk is not suitable due to differences in protein and electrolyte levels.
- Most babies can drink full cream cow’s milk by 12 months.
- Use breastmilk or infant formula.
- Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

Cereal milks: 

- Plant-based milks (e.g. rice, soy, oat or almond-based milk) are not recommended for children under 2 years.
- Low fat and reduced fat milks are recommended.

- After 2 years of age children can drink reduced fat milks (2-2.5% fat).
- After 5 years of age children can drink low fat milks.
- Most children can drink full cream cow’s milk by 12 months.
- Use breastmilk or infant formula.
- Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

Healthy Eating 

- Steering parents in the development of healthy eating habits and encouraging their children to eat a healthy diet.
- Providing parents with educational materials, including those at home and in hospitals.
- Supporting parents in their efforts to provide healthy meals for their children.

- The key to good health is a balanced diet that includes plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products.
- A healthy diet is important for the growth and development of children.
- A healthy diet can help prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

- The Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Infant Feeding Guidelines are helpful resources for parents.
- For more information, visit the Healthy Kids website.
- For a personal health record, the Blue Book is available.
- For further information, contact the Breastfeeding Helpline or the Mothersafe Medications in Pregnancy website.
- For further information, contact the Tresillian 24-hour Parents Helpline.
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 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 1/2 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.

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

Babies can easily get sick from food poisoning:
- 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).

If using water to mix with baby foods, boil and cool it first. After heating food, always mix it thoroughly and let it cool to room temperature before they learn to like them.

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

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, handling and chewing food assists the development of social skills and promotes the pleasure of eating.

Babies have very sensitive taste buds at this stage and don’t need salt, sugar or other flavourings added to their food.

Some babies may not like the taste of new foods. They may need to be offered foods many times before they learn to like them.

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).

5. COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS

These can be useful, but:
- They are more expensive than home cooked foods.
- They may lack, 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 ‘squeezy’ 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 custards/yoghurts/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 taste. If you continue to offer a variety of healthy foods, your baby will take 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.

For more information about giving finger foods, talk to a Child and Family Health Nurse.
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 around 6 months. There are no benefits to introducing solid foods before this time.

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- 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.

Babies have very sensitive taste buds at this stage and don’t need salt, sugar or other flavourings added to their food. Some babies may not like the taste of new foods. They may need to be offered foods many times before they learn to like them.

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

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, handling and chewing food assists the development of social skills and promotes the pleasure of eating.

Babies enjoy foods that they can pick up with their hands and eat by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm soapy water first.

Suggestions
1. Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot, zucchini, zucchini strips, 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 ripe pear, a small whole orange, peeled.
3. Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing or small thin pieces to be picked up with the thumb and forefinger.

5. COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS

These can be useful, but:
- They are more expensive than home cooked foods.
- They may lack, 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 ‘squeezy’ 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 custards/yoghurts/pureed fruit) offer no nutritional advantage over regular products.

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

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

Babies can easily get sick from food poisoning:
1. Wash hands with warm running water and soap before preparing food for your baby or feeding your baby.
2. Clean food preparation areas before and after preparing food. Use clean utensils.
3. If preparing formula, sterilise bottles and other equipment.
4. Wash fruit and vegetables well-even vegetables that are to be peeled and cooked.
5. Label and date food to be refrigerated or frozen. Prepared food can be stored in the body of the fridge for up to 48 hours. Hot food can be put straight into the refrigerator.
6. Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, not on the bench (at room temperature). Defrost in the microwave if you are going to use the food straight away.
7. Check the temperature of the food by tasting it with a clean spoon. Use another clean spoon to feed your baby. Don’t put your baby’s food in your mouth then give it to your baby.
8. Once food has been warmed and offered to your baby, throw out any left in the bowl.

9. It is important to realise that ‘off’ food can look, smell and taste OK. So, ‘if in doubt, throw it out’.

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).

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.

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.

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

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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.

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

Babies can easily get sick from food poisoning:
1. Wash hands with warm running water and soap before preparing food for your baby or feeding your baby.
2. Clean food preparation areas before and after preparing food. Use clean utensils.
3. If preparing formula, sterilise bottles and other equipment.
4. Wash fruit and vegetables well—even vegetables that are to be peeled and cooked.
5. Label and date food to be refrigerated or frozen.
6. Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, not on the bench (at room temperature). Defrost in the microwave if you are going to use the food straight away.
7. Check the temperature of the food by tasting it with a clean spoon. Use another clean spoon to feed your baby. Don’t put your baby’s food in your mouth then give it to your baby.
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- to watch them while they are eating
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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.

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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, handling and chewing food assists the development of fine motor skills and promotes the pleasure of eating.

Babies enjoy foods that they can pick up with their hands and eat by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm soapy water first.

Suggestions
1. Boiled or steamed vegetables — potato, pumpkin, carrot, circles, zucchini strips, beets, 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 ripe pear, a small whole orange, peeled.
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 lack, 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 ‘squeezy’ 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 custards/yoghurts/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 taste. If you continue to offer a variety of healthy foods, your baby will grow and thrive. 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.
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 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.

Babies have very sensitive taste buds at this stage and don’t need salt, sugar or other flavourings added to their food. Some babies may not like the taste of new foods. They may need to be offered foods many times before they learn to like them.

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:
1. Wash hands with warm running water and soap before preparing food for your baby or feeding your baby.
2. Clean food preparation areas before and after preparing food. Use clean utensils.
3. If preparing formula, sterilise bottles and other equipment.
4. Wash fruit and vegetables well— even vegetables that are to be peeled and cooked.
5. Label and date food to be refrigerated or frozen. Prepared food can be stored in the body of the fridge for up to 48 hours. Hot food can be put straight into the refrigerator.
6. Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, not on the bench (at room temperature). Defrost in the microwave if you are going to use the food straight away.
7. Check the temperature of the food by tasting it with a clean spoon. Use another clean spoon to feed your baby. Don’t put your baby’s food in your mouth then give it to your baby.
8. Once food has been warmed and offered to your baby, throw out any left in the bowl.
9. It is important to realise that ‘off’ food can look, smell and taste OK. So, ‘if in doubt, throw it out’.

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).

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.

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, handling and chewing food assists the development of social skills and promotes the pleasure of eating.

Babies enjoy foods that they can pick up with their hands and eat by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm soapy water first.

Suggestions
1. Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot, circles, zucchini strips, beets, 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 ripe pear, a small whole orange, peeled.
3. Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing 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.

This photograph indicates texture and variety, not quantity.

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 lack, 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 ‘squeezy’ 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 taste. If you continue to offer a variety of healthy foods, your baby will learn to eat what ‘appeases’. 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.
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.

3. **SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE**

Babies can easily get sick from food poisoning:
1. Wash hands with warm running water and soap before preparing food for your baby or feeding your baby.
2. Clean food preparation areas before and after preparing food. Use clean utensils.
3. If preparing formula, sterilise bottles and other equipment.
4. Wash fruit and vegetables well-even vegetables that are to be peeled and cooked.
5. Label and date food to be refrigerated or frozen. Prepared food can be stored in the body of the fridge for up to 48 hours. Hot food can be put straight into the refrigerator.
6. Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, not on the bench (at room temperature). Defrost in the microwave if you are going to use the food straight away.
7. Check the temperature of the food by tasting it with a clean spoon. Use another clean spoon to feed your baby. Don’t put your baby’s food in your mouth then give it to your baby.
8. Once food has been warmed and offered to your baby, throw out any left in the bowl.
9. It is important to realise that ‘off’ food can look, smell and taste OK. So, ‘if in doubt, throw it out’.

**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).

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.

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, handling and chewing food assists the development of social skills and promotes the pleasure of eating.

Babies enjoy foods that they can pick up with their hands and eat by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm soapy water first.

**Suggestions**
1. Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot circles, zucchini strips, beets, 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 ripe pear, a small whole orange, peeled.
3. Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing and eat by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm running water and soap before preparing food. Use clean utensils.

- 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.

This photograph indicates texture and variety, not quantity.

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 lack, 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 ‘squeezy’ 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 custards/yoghurts/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 enthusiasm and others will take longer to want more than just a taste. If you continue to offer a variety of healthy foods, your baby will grow 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.
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 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 extra 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.

Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot circles, zucchini strips, beets, peas or slices of beetroot. Hard vegetables need to be well cooked and offered as large chunks.

Raw foods – whole small banana, tomato slices, a small ripe pear, a small whole orange, peeled.

Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing and forefinger.

Babies enjoy foods that they can pick up with their hands and eat by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm soapy water first.

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

Babies can easily get sick from food poisoning:

1. Wash hands with warm running water and soap before preparing food for your baby or feeding your baby.
2. Clean food preparation areas before and after preparing food. Use clean utensils.
3. If preparing formula, sterilise bottles and other equipment.
4. Wash fruit and vegetables well—especially vegetables, popcorn, rice cakes and cocktail frankfurts and small slippery foods (such as whole grapes and whole cherry tomatoes).

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.
- They may need to be offered foods many times before they learn to like them.
- Avoid nutrient poor foods with high levels of saturated fat, sugar, or salt (e.g. cakes, biscuits, confectionery and potato chips).

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 taste. If you continue to offer a variety of healthy foods, your baby will enjoy them, because they are the ‘default’ thing to eat. 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.
FROM 12 MONTHS

7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

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

Nuts:
Babies can choke on nuts and similar hard foods. Nut allergies are a problem in some families.

Cow’s Milk:
Is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Eating whole milk is recommended.

Milk from other animal sources:
Is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Use breastmilk or infant formula.

Plant-based milks:
Are not recommended for children under 2 years. Use breastmilk or infant formula.

Low fat and reduced fat milks:
Are not recommended for children under 2 years. Avoid fat-free/skim milk.

Fruit juices:
Offer only 100% fruit juice or mixed juice with water.

Water: (water before milk)
Monitor intake of cooled boiled water on a daily basis. Some babies will prefer to start with soft foods. Can swallow solids in a cup.

8. ALLERGIES

There is no particular order advised for the introduction of solid foods or rate that new foods should be introduced, as long as iron rich foods are introduced first.

If allergies are a problem in your family seek advice from a health professional. The following foods are more commonly associated with allergies in babies: milk, eggs, seafood/fish, nuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy and wheat. There is no need to delay introduction of these foods after 6 months.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

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 (Freecall 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 (Freecall outside Sydney metropolitan area)
Personal Health Record (known as the ‘Blue Book’): www.health.nsw.gov.au
Healthy Kids website: www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

References:
- Infant Feeding Guidelines NHMRC 2012
- Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement WMHC 2011
- Australian Dietary Guidelines NHMRC 2013

Developed by Nutrition Services and Central Coast Kids and Families, Central Coast Local Health District, in partnership with the Australian Breastfeeding Association and mothers of the Central Coast. The information in this leaflet is intended as a general guide for parents of healthy full term babies. For more copies of this pamphlet contact the Better Health Centre. Phone (02) 9879 0443, Fax (02) 9879 0994.
7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

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

Nuts: Babies can choke on nuts and similar hard foods. Nuts contain substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.

Caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks (e.g. soft drinks, cordials, energy drinks): offer babies coffee or sugar sweetened drinks.

Fruit juice: contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.

Tea: contains substances which reduce your baby’s ability to absorb iron and other essential minerals.

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FOR PARENTS OF 0 TO 12 MONTH OLD BABIES

Starting Family Foods
Introducing your baby to solid foods

FROM 12 MONTHS

Low fat and reduced fat milks:
After 2 years of age children can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).

Calcium enriched soy, rice and oat beverages can be used after 12 months if under 12 months. Calcium enriched rice and oat beverages can be used after 12 months if under supervision by a health professional.

Milk from other animal sources:
Is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Use breastmilk or infant formula.

Babies can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).

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