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 pastes/spreads can be offered from 6 months.

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

Milk from other animal sources:
Including goat’s and sheep’s milk is not suitable due to differences in protein and electrolyte levels.

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 (2.5% fat). After 5 years of age children can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).

Plant-based milks:
E.g. 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.

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

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 involved in reactions in children under the age of 3 years.

- Red kidney bean
- Chickpeas
- Fettuccine
- Polenta
- Muesli
- Wheat flakes
- Oat beverages
- Sheep’s milk
- Sesame
- Tree nuts
- Soy
- Wheat

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 688 268
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.healthkids.nsw.gov.au

References:
- Infant Feeding Guidelines NIN Minutes 2012
- Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement WPKS 2011
- Australian Dietary Guidelines NIN Minutes 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 Ph: (02) 9879 0443, Fax: (02) 9879 0994.
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 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
Shows interest in food
Begins chewing
Can swallow 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, steamed 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)

Mashed/Minced/Finely Chopped

Finger Foods

Family foods

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 your baby wants.

Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

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

References:

- Breastfeeding Practices; Australian Paediatric Association, 2004
- Infant Feeding Guidelines NHMRC 2012
- Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement WHO 2011
- Families, Central Coast Local Health District, in partnership with Nutrition Services and Central Coast Kids and Parents Health Network...
- For centre locations throughout NSW, consult your local Healthy Eating 'Nutrition Centre'.
### 7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods</th>
<th>From Birth to Around 6 Months</th>
<th>From Around 6 Months to 12 Months</th>
<th>From 12 Months and Beyond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breastmilk or infant formula</td>
<td>Breastmilk provides adequate fluid up to around 6 months.</td>
<td>Continue breastfeeding as long as you and your baby want to keep going.</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### 8. ALLERGIES

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

- If you want your baby to grow up on a plant-based diet (vegetarian), 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

- www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au
- www.health.nsw.gov.au
- Personal Health Record (known as the 'Blue Book')
- Phone: (02) 9382 6539 or 1300 647 848
- Mothersafe. Medications in Pregnancy
- www.karitane.org.au
- Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268
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- Published by Families, Central Coast Local Health District, in partnership with the Australian Dietetic Association, Healthier NSW, and the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

### 10. DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

#### Around 6 Months

- Developmental Stage
- Stronger suck
- Shovels interest in food
- Begins chewing
- Can swallow solids
- Biling
- 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.

**Mashed/Minced/Finely Chopped**

**Finger Foods**

**Family foods**

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, steamed 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.
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 Around 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

Begin chewing

Can swallow solids

Biting

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.

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- 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

At 12 months 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.

References:

www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

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Personal Health Record (known as the ‘Blue Book’):

Phone: (02) 9382 6539 or 1800 647 848

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Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268

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www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Developmental Stage

Biting

Clearing spoon with lips

Chewing developing

shows interest in food

Stronger suck

Can swallow solids

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

Begin chewing

Can swallow solids

Biting

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.

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FROM 12 MONTHS

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Developed chewing movement

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Early Childhood Health Centres:
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’.

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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 and fruit 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 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
- 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 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.

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 fall in line with 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.

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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 (2019) 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 breast milk 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. Breast milk 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.
· There are no benefits to introducing solid foods before around 6 months.

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

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 high 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).

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.

- If preparing food, sterilise bottles and other equipment.
- Label and date food to be refrigerated or frozen.
- Keep food at a temperature below 5°C (less than ½ teaspoon). Others may want more.
- 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.
- There are no benefits to introducing solid foods before around 6 months.

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 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.

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 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 ‘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?

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. Breast milk 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 ‘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.

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.

SLEEP

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

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

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.

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- 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 from the microwaves if you are going to use the food straight away.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Once food has been warmed and offered to your baby, throw out any left in the bowl.
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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 soap and water first.

Suggestions
1. Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot circles, zucchini strips, beets, pea 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 white 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.

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 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 ‘squeezey’ 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 do your ‘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.
Both the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) 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’.

1. WHY WAIT UNTIL AROUND 6 MONTHS BEFORE 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.

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

2. THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN FIRST INTRODUCING SOLID 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).

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.

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’.

10. Remember eating needs to be a safe and enjoyable activity.
11. Always remain with your baby while they are eating.
12. Eating is a social occasion.
13. 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.

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

4. FINGER FOODS

5. COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS

6. WHAT ELSE?

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 motor skills, senses and social development.

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 slices, peas, carrots 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.

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 are the best 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.

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

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.

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.

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

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How much food?

Babies are individuals. Some babies eat enthusiastically and others will take longer to want more than just a little. Remember, milk is still a very important food for babies for at least the first 12 months.

Fussy eaters

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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.

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.

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.
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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 until they are two. Babies are more likely to wake if they are hungry or in need of comfort.

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.

Fussy eaters
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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

Eating safely

As babies are more likely to choke on food than an adult, it is important:
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- 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).

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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.

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

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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 support the idea. 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.
Honey:
Can have bacteria in it which can cause severe illness (botulism) in infants under 12 months old. (contact your local public health unit for more information).

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

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

Fruit juice:
Offers no nutritional benefits to babies under 6 months. After 6 months fruit juice is no longer recommended. (contact your local health clinic for more information).

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:
Including goat’s and sheep’s milk is not suitable due to differences in protein and electrolyte levels. (contact your local health clinic for more information).

Plant-based milks:
E.g. soy, rice, coconum, 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.

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

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 (02) 9879 0443, Fax (02) 9879 0994.


Revised September 2015

FOR PARENTS OF 0 TO 12 MONTH OLD BABIES

7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

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

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Babies can choke on nuts and similar hard foods. Nut pastes and spreads can be offered from 6 months.

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

FOR PARENTS OF 0 TO 12 MONTH OLD BABIES

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.

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 686 266
www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Tresillian 24-hour Parents Helpline:
(02) 9787 0855 or 1300 272 736
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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.healthkids.nsw.gov.au

References:
• Infant Feeding Guidelines NHMRC 2012
• Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement WHPD 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

FROM 12 MONTHS

Milk, yoghurt, cheese are intended as a general guide for parents of healthy full term babies. For more copies of this pamphlet contact the Better Health Centre Ph (02) 9879 0443, Fax (02) 9879 0994.
7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

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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 pastes can be offered from 6 months. Eating nuts can be associated with increased risk of allergic reactions later in life.

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

Infant formula:
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 milk (e.g. skim milk).

Milk from other animal sources:
Not an appropriate source of nutrition for babies under 12 months. Calcium enriched soy, rice and or quinoa milks (2-2.5% fat). After 5 years of age children can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).

12 months. Calcium enriched soy, rice and/or high cereal mostly whole grain. Toddler follow-on milks are not necessary.

12 months. Use breastmilk or infant formula.

2 years of age. Cotswold cows milk can be started.

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