



Baby's first foods

From birth to 12 months

For mums, dads, families and carers



Queensland
Government

What age do I give foods to my baby?

- **Before 6 months old,** breast milk or baby formula is all your baby needs.
- **At around 6 months old,** give healthy foods to your baby, as your baby needs more than breast milk or baby formula to grow and develop.





We are learning new things all the time.

Mum, Dad, family and carers, please see your health professional for the latest information.

What if my baby was born premature?

If your baby was born premature, talk to your health professional before giving your baby food.

A health professional could mean your doctor, child health nurse, Indigenous health care worker or liaison worker, dietitian/nutritionist, or other allied health professional.

1

What age do I give foods to my baby?

How do I know my baby is ready for foods?

When your baby is around 6 months old, they will show you signs that they are ready for their first foods.

Signs to look for:



Is your baby holding their head up and sitting up?



Is your baby reaching for food and getting excited when you or your family are eating?



Is your baby picking food up and bringing it to their mouth?

Every baby is different. If your baby is not showing all the signs, try again in a few days.



Is your baby opening their mouth when food or a spoon touches their lips?

If your baby is pushing food out with their tongue then they are not ready for their first foods just yet.

If you are worried or if you are not sure what your baby is trying to tell you, ask your health professional.

How do I know my baby is ready for foods?

How much food do I give my baby?

Should I keep breastfeeding if I give my baby food?

- **At around 6 months old,** give your baby breast milk or baby formula on demand, followed by your baby's first foods.
- **After 12 months old,** food may be given first followed by breast milk or baby formula.

How much food should I give my baby?

- At the start, offer your baby only a small amount of food. Like a teaspoon size.
- Start with one meal per day, when your baby is most hungry.
- As your baby grows up, increase the number and the size of meals you give your baby each day.



Did you know

- Family time is important. Your baby will learn how to eat by watching you and others. Feed your baby at family meal times so they can learn. TV or mobile phones can be distracting for babies.
- Your baby's nappy may change as you give your baby their first foods. If you are worried, talk to your health professional.



**You should never leave your baby alone while they are eating.
Stay with your baby to make sure that they are safe and do not choke.**

If you are not sure how much food to give your baby, ask your health professional.

3

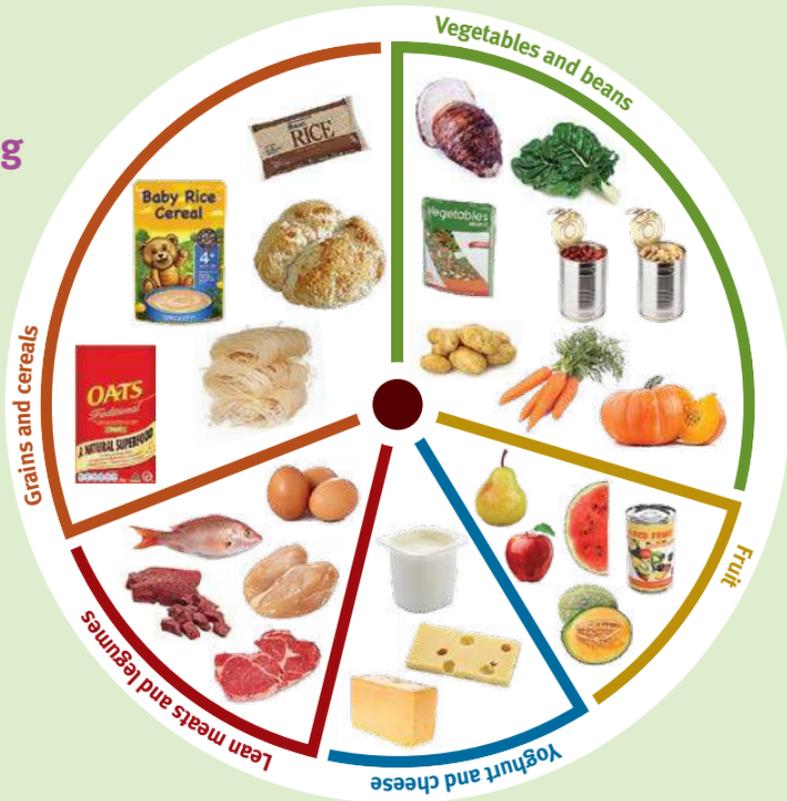
How much food do I give my baby?

What foods do I give my baby?

Give your baby a variety of foods in any order, including iron-rich foods.

Iron-rich foods are important for your baby's blood, brain, and growth and can be chosen every day for your baby.

Remember to cut off the fat and skin from meats and chicken.



What else can I give my baby?

Everyday foods. These include:

- **Vegetables and beans:** avocado, sweet potato, pumpkin, taro, cassava, broccoli, carrot, cucumber, cabbage, spinach, silverbeet, tofu, yam, lentils, red kidney beans, butter beans, nori (seaweed).
- **Fruit:** banana, pear, paw paw, watermelon, kiwi fruit, oranges, apple.
- **Grains and cereals:** rice, noodles, pasta, bread, damper, wraps, oats, barley, polenta, baby cereal.
- **Lean meats and legumes:** beef, pork, goat, kangaroo, bush meats, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, tofu, legumes, lentils, chickpeas, split peas, beans.
- **Yoghurt and cheese.**

Remember, fill your baby up with everyday foods and iron-rich foods first.

Your baby only has a small tummy and it can fill up fast. Your baby may need to try a new food up to 15 times before they like the new flavour.

*Foods with different colours, textures, and flavours will help keep your baby healthy.
If you are not sure what foods to give your baby, ask your health professional.*

4

What foods do I give my baby?

How do I prepare my baby's food?

At around 6 months old

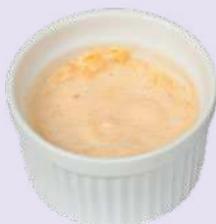
Start with pureed, mashed or mushy foods then go to small pieces as your baby grows.

- An easy way to mash up food is with a fork.

Try these mixed food ideas:



Puree



Puree paw paw and mix into yoghurt

Mash



Mash avocado, banana, and baby cereal with extra iron together

Mush



Mush pumpkin, carrot and kangaroo mince together

At around 8 months old

Start to give your baby finger foods to hold. They may need your help at the start.

- Your baby is still learning to chew. Make sure the finger foods are soft and are cut into small pieces so your baby does not choke.



At around 12 months old

Your baby can be eating the same foods as the rest of the family. Help your baby by cutting up the meal.

Every baby will eat different amounts so try not to compare your baby to other babies.

To develop healthy eating habits, do not force feed your baby or use food as a reward.



If you are worried that your baby is not eating enough or want more tips on how to prepare your baby's food, ask your health professional.

What foods do I avoid giving my baby?

Do not add sugar or salt to your baby's food.

Too much sugar can be very bad for your baby. It can rot their teeth and make them put on too much weight.



Too much salt can be very bad for your baby's kidneys and heart.



Food has lots of natural flavour. You do not need to add salt or sugar to foods to make them tastier.



What about fat?

- Some foods are high in fat and can be bad for your baby's heart and can make them put on too much weight.
- Remember to cut off the fat and skin from meats and chicken.

Do not give whole nuts or other hard foods

- Whole nuts and hard foods are unsafe for your baby and can make them choke.
- Whole nuts can include cashews, almonds or macadamia nuts, palm, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, and nut bars.

Do not give honey

- Honey is not good for babies under 12 months old. It may lead to botulism, which can make your baby very sick.

If you are worried your baby is eating food that is too high in sugar, salt or fat, ask your health professional.

What drinks do I give my baby?

Before 6 months old

- Breast milk or baby formula is the only drink that your baby needs.



At around 6 to 12 months old

- Your baby can have boiled water that has been cooled down. At the start, offer your baby a small amount and increase the amount as your baby grows.
- Keep giving your baby breast milk or baby formula until they are 12 months old.



After 12 months old

- Clean and safe tap water should be offered to your baby every day.
- Full fat cow's milk is okay to give to your baby and can help your baby grow and develop.
- Continue to give your baby breast milk if wanted.



Giving your baby a cup

- At 6 months old, your baby can start drinking from a cup. Try giving your baby their milk or water in a cup instead of a feeding bottle.
- Do not give a bottle or cup to your baby while in bed. Drinking while lying down is unsafe and your baby may choke.



At first they will need to use 2 hands and there may be some spills but they will get the hang of it soon.

What drinks do I avoid giving to my baby?

Milks

- Do not give your baby low or reduced fat milks until they are over 2 years old.
 - These can include: lite, trim, skim or fat free.
- Talk to your health professional before giving other milks like goat, sheep, oat, almond, coconut or rice milk to your baby.

Other drinks

- Do not give your baby fruit juice, cordial, soft drinks, sport drinks, energy drinks, flavoured waters, and flavoured milks.
 - These drinks can have a lot of sugar. They can rot your baby's teeth and make your baby put on too much weight.

If you are not sure what drinks to give your baby or when to give breast milk or baby formula, ask your health professional.

What drinks do I give my baby?

What about food bought from the shops?

Home-made food can be healthier for your baby and is often cheaper than food bought from the shops.

Baby food in jars, cans and squeeze pouches

- These are okay to give your baby sometimes. Make sure they are not the only food you give your baby.
- These foods do not give your baby a variety of colours, textures and flavours.
- Everyday foods are best to give your baby.



Pasta bake: lean beef mince, wholemeal pasta, tomato, carrot, zucchini, basil



Noodle stir-fry: chicken, rice noodles, broccoli, carrot, beans, lemon

If you buy baby food from the shops, choose baby foods with vegetables and meats as your first choice. Do not choose desserts and fruit bars as these foods have a lot of added sugar.

Sauces and other foods

When bought from the shops, these may have a lot of added sugar and salt. They are not good to give to your baby.

These can include:

- Ready-made sauces like pasta, curry, stir-fry, soy, wasabi, mustard, tomato or BBQ sauces.
- Beef jerky.
- Powdered or tinned soups and 2 minute noodles.
- Gravy mixes and stock cubes or liquids.



Iron-rich foods

- Your baby can get enough iron from red meats, bush meats, seafood, baby cereal with extra iron, lentils, beans, and green leafy vegetables.
- These are better for your baby than buying baby food from the shops even if the labels say they are high in iron or has extra iron.

If you need help choosing the right foods and reading food labels, ask your health professional.

How do I keep my baby's food safe?

Food safety is very important for the whole family. Babies can get very sick, very quickly.

Preparing food safely

- Always wash your hands before and after making food for your baby and family.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables.
- Keep raw meats away from raw or cooked food. Use a separate cutting board for raw meats, chicken, fish and seafood.
- Cook all foods really well. Make sure meats are not pink. Make sure seafood is well cooked.
 - Cook eggs until the white is completely set and the egg yolk begins to thicken.
- Remove all bones from meats, chicken, fish and seafood. Look out for the small bones by checking with your finger.



Try your baby's food first to make sure it is not too hot. Remember do not use the same spoon you used to feed your baby. It can spread germs.

Storing food safely

- Use leftovers within 2 days. Only reheat your baby's food once and then throw the rest away.
- Make sure raw meats, chicken and seafood are not dripping on other foods in the fridge.
- Put all prepared, ready-to-eat food in a sealed container in the fridge or freezer. Make sure cooked food has stopped steaming first.
- If you do not have a fridge, store food in an esky with ice.

Mum, Dad, family and carers, make sure you:

- Always wash your hands before and after feeding your baby.
- Sterilise baby bottles with boiling water.
- Have clean kitchen benches.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen.
- When you are washing up use hot, soapy water. Rinse with clean water and air dry.

Freezer

Bread

(3 Months)

Raw Meat

(2-4 Months)

Place in the fridge the day before cooking to defrost.

Milk
(5-7 Days)



Cooked Foods
(2-3 Days)

Meat
(3-4 Days)

Eggs
(3-4 Weeks)

Fruit and Vegetables
(3-4 Days)

Ask your health professional for bottle sterilising methods and food safety tips.

Other frequently asked questions

What about foods that may cause an allergy?

- We are learning new things all the time and advice may have changed since you were a child.
- The current advice says to give your baby their first foods not too early or not too late. Give your baby their first foods at around 6 months old.
- You can give your baby different foods in any order, including peanut butter, seafood and cooked whole eggs.
- Many mums, dads, families and carers are worried when they give their babies their first foods. If you are worried, talk to your health professional.

Can I give my baby egg, and should I give them the yolk or white section of the egg?

- You can give your baby cooked, whole eggs from around 6 months old.
- Cook eggs until the white is completely set and the egg yolk begins to thicken. Do not give your baby raw eggs or any food that contains raw eggs. This includes deep-fried or home-made ice-cream, or mayonnaise.

Is seafood and fish okay for my baby and when should it be given?

- Seafood is safe for most babies. You can give seafood to your baby from around 6 months old. Make sure you remove all the bones first.

What about mercury in fish?

- Many types of fish contain mercury. These fish can include swordfish, shark (flake), or barramundi.
- Too much mercury is bad for your baby's growth and development.
- This means that your baby can only have fish that contains mercury sometimes.

Can I add spices, herbs, and salt to my baby's meals?

- Pure spices and herbs are okay to add to your baby's meal in small amounts.
- Do not add any salt to your baby's meals. Some ready-made spice mixtures that you buy from the shops may contain salt. You should not add these mixtures to your baby's meals.

What about baby-led weaning?

- Baby-led weaning is a way of giving first foods by simply letting your baby feed themselves. Talk to your health professional for advice and information before trying baby-led weaning.
- You should never leave your baby alone while they are eating. Stay with your baby to make sure that they are safe and do not choke.

What about popular diets?

- Do not restrict or limit your baby's food unless told to by your health professional.
- Before 6 months old, only give your baby breast milk or baby formula.
- At around 6 months old, give your baby a variety of foods in any order, including iron-rich foods.



Where do I find help and advice?

Child Health Information: Your guide to the first 12 months

This booklet provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers on the first 12 months of your baby's life. This booklet can be found in the Queensland Health 'Personal Health Record' book or online.

www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/child-health-information-book.pdf

Queensland Government

This website provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers on different topics for your baby's and family's health.

www.qld.gov.au/health/children/index.html

Health Professionals

Your local health professional can help and give advice to mum, dad, family and carers on when and how to feed your baby, and what type of foods and drinks to feed your baby. You can visit this website to find a health service or health professional near you.

www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/service-finder/

13 HEALTH

Mum, dad, family and carers can call 13 HEALTH about any health concern you have for you or your baby.

www.health.qld.gov.au/13health/

Eat for Health

This website provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers about what your family and your baby should be eating every day. It also includes breastfeeding advice for mums.

www.eatforhealth.gov.au/

Health Direct

This helpline and website provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers on different topics for your baby's and family's health. This includes advice on breastfeeding for mum and food allergies.

Call: **1800 022 222** or

www.healthdirect.gov.au/

Raising Children Network

This website provides helpful information for mum, dad, family and carers on different topics for your baby's and family's health.

www.raisingchildren.net.au/

Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)

This helpline and website provides mum, dad, family and carers with practical mum-to-mum support and breastfeeding information.

Call: **1800 686 268** or

www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Australian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)

This website provides helpful information on allergies, including food allergies.

www.allergy.org.au/

© State of Queensland (Queensland Health) 2015

This document is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives 3.0 Australian licence. In essence, you are free to copy and communicate the work in its current form for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the Centre for Children's Health and Wellbeing, Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service, Queensland Health and abide by the licence terms. You may not alter or adapt the work in any way. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/deed.en>

For further information, please contact the Centre for Children's Health and Wellbeing, Level 9, 199 Grey Street, South Brisbane, Queensland, 4101, email CCHW@health.qld.gov.au, phone (07) 3310 7704. For permissions beyond the scope of this licence contact: Intellectual Property Officer, Queensland Health, PO BOX 2368, Fortitude Valley BC, QLD 4006, email ip_officer@health.qld.gov.au, phone (07) 3328 9862.

Acknowledgements

The development of this resource was funded by the Queensland Government under the Promoting Optimal Maternal and Infant Nutrition project, hosted by Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service. Special thanks to key stakeholders involved in the development of this resource, including:

- Apunipima Cape York Health Council
- Central West Queensland Hospital and Health Service
- Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
- Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service
- Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service
- Metro South Hospital and Health Service
- Queensland University of Technology
- Royal Flying Doctor Service
- South West Hospital and Health Service
- Townsville Hospital and Health Service
- Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service

We would like to thank the babies, families and carers that were a part of the development of this resource.



WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this resource may contain images of deceased persons.

