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Baby Nutrition and Feeding: Your Guide

So, how will you feed your newborn? It's a common and important question for any parent.

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Baby Nutrition and Feeding: Your Guide

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Sunday, July 30th, 2017

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Even before your baby arrives (it's never too early to start making decisions), you can **turn to this guide to help prep your infant feeding plan** and find out valuable facts about baby nutrition. Constantly craving information? Add to the info below with [guidance on first-year feeding from the Canadian Paediatric Society](#). ^[6]

Breast milk is best

Why breast milk? Because it's:

- Nutrient-rich^α
- Able to change to meet the nutritional needs of your baby as they grow (with each feeding, really).
- Made to give your baby the best start in life.
- The perfect food for your newborn baby.

Plus, breastfeeding is great for you, too—it can help you:

- Return to your pre-pregnancy weight faster.
- Create an intimate bond between you and your baby.

Health Canada recommends that for the nutrition, immunologic protection, growth, and development of infants and toddlers, you breastfeed exclusively for the first six months, and you sustain it for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding.^{1,2}

Your infant feeding plan

How you feed your baby is a very personal decision. **Here's what you should consider while you personalize your plan.**

- Base it on the right information, advice and support from your healthcare professional and your family.
- Know that breast milk is the ideal food for your baby during the first six months of her life.
- Look over the variety of infant formulas available, should you choose to introduce one.

As you get ready to give your baby all the nourishment she'll need by developing an infant feeding plan—consider this:

1. Healthy Mom, healthy Baby

- Eat healthy (and enough. Newborns feed every 2-3 hours, you gotta eat, too).
- Hydrate.
- Get lots of rest.
- Call on family and friends for help around the house (or just let the chores wait).
- Keep "[Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide](#) [7]" on your fridge.

2. Learn about breastfeeding

Ready, set, [breastfeed!](#) [8] Make it a fulfilling experience for both of you by arming yourself with helpful hints, as well as tips on how to cope with challenges.

3. Get right to it!

- Breastfeed ASAP after birth (within 30 to 60 minutes is recommended if you are healthy enough to do so).
- Hold your baby to skin-to-skin often to promote successful breastfeeding initiation.
- Confirm your hospital supports 24-hour rooming-in (so you never keep your hungry baby waiting).

4. Know your supplementing options

- Your choices include breastfeeding (ideally), supplementing breast milk with infant formula or feeding with infant formula only.
- Health Canada recommends cow milk-based commercial infant formula as the only safe and nutritious alternative to breast milk.^{1,2}
- Canadian healthcare experts recommend cow's-milk based infant formula from birth until 9 to 12 months of age.^{1,2}
- Iron-fortified infant formula offers a complete source of nutrition for your baby during the first year (The Canadian government actually regulates the composition of infant formula).
- Infant formulas contain the recommended amounts of fat, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals needed for baby's growth and development.
- You have several choices of infant formulas – always speak to your doctor before making changes to what you feed your baby.

GOOD START PLUS 1 Powder is our closest formula to breast milk and the only baby formula with Comfort Proteins™ and Probiotics.

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When can my baby have cow's milk?

Here's why whole (3.25%) cow's milk isn't recommended until your baby is at least **9-12 months old**:

- **Low iron content:** Not a good source of iron to begin with, cow's milk can actually decrease absorption of iron from other iron-containing foods (and too much milk can also lead to iron deficiency).
- **Too much sodium:** Approximately three times more sodium than breast milk and can be hard on your baby's kidneys.
- **Too much protein:** Approximately three times more protein than breast milk, whole cow's milk can be difficult for some babies to digest.

Your growing baby needs iron

As you strengthen your iron knowledge with the info below, know that **your baby's initial iron reserves may start to run low at about the 6-month mark** ^[10]¹.

Why iron?

- It's a vital nutrient that contributes to the normal growth and development of your baby.
- It's essential in building red blood cells that transport oxygen throughout her little body.

How can she get iron?

- Healthy full term infants are born with iron stores, which meet their needs until about 6 months of age.
- **Your own iron-rich diet** will help ensure that these stores stay topped up.
- Breast milk will provide your baby with adequate iron for those first 6 months ^[10]¹.
- Should you choose to supplement or exclusively formula feed, **choose an iron-fortified formula.**
- Introduce iron-rich solid foods ^[10] after the 6-month mark¹.

Wait, solid foods?

- Yep, your baby will be ready to start eating solid foods by around 6 months.
- The introduction of foods is a steady progression of single ingredients and portion sizes between 6 and 12 months of age.
- **Health Canada recommends baby's first foods be iron-rich.**¹
- **Healthy iron-rich options are meat, meat alternatives and iron-fortified baby cereal.**
- Babies should be offered iron-rich foods 2 or more times a day.^{1,2}

Still not sure how to meet your baby's iron needs once she's accustomed to solid food? Just follow the nutrition recommendations in the chart below.³

Ironclad Reminders

- **Breastfeeding is ideal**—and it's nature's way of delivering iron to your baby for the first 6 months.
- **Always choose an iron-fortified infant formula** if you decide to supplement or exclusively formula-feed.
- **Introduce iron-rich foods** at around 6 months of age whether you're breastfeeding or formula feeding (just talk to your baby's doctor, first).
- **Avoid whole cow's milk** until at least 9-12 months of age as it is a poor source of iron.
- **Be aware of the myths** and know there is no scientific data that shows a correlation between iron-fortified formulas and gastrointestinal problems such as colic, constipation and fussiness.
- **Store all vitamin supplements that contain iron, including your prenatal and postpartum vitamins, out of children's reach**—large amounts can be harmful (You'll have them on hand, especially if your healthcare professional has advised supplementing your baby's diet with iron in addition to breastfeeding or formula feeding).
- **Call your doctor or visit your local emergency room immediately if you suspect excessive iron intake.**

Talk to your doctor about your baby's iron needs and iron deficiency. Iron deficiency can cause your baby to be less active than usual, and perhaps even develop more slowly.

DHA and ARA

You're probably aware of these two fatty acids that offer health benefits: DHA (you know it as docosahexaenoic acid, right?), an omega-3 fat, and ARA (arachidonic acid, of course), an omega-6 fat.

What makes them so important?

Experts agree that DHA and ARA are essential for healthy brain and eye development^{4,5} (they actually accumulate in the brain and eye tissue of your baby before birth).

The earlier you can start getting DHA, a major brain-nourishing nutrient, the better—up to 90% of your baby's brain growth will be complete by age three⁶.

How do I get them?

Your body will produce DHA and ARA from two essential omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids: alpha-linolenic (ALA) and linoleic acid.

It all starts though, with your healthy diet—so eat foods rich in DHA⁵, like:

- **Fatty fish:** Atlantic salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines and cod are your best DHA bets (in that order).
- **Omega-3 eggs fortified with DHA:** A great substitute if you're not a fish fan.
- **Flaxseed and walnuts:** Decent sources, yes, but you'll only get a small amount of DHA once your body processes these.

How does my baby get them?

These nutrients are passed through your breast milk.

Plus, your baby's body produces them the same way yours does, and **alpha-linolenic and linoleic acid are currently added to all infant formulas. These essential fatty acids are also found in a variety of solid foods⁵**—so look out for them when you're making your feeding choices.

Your healthcare professional can answer any more of your questions about DHA and ARA.

The Pros of Probiotics: Developing Your Baby's Immune System

Ah, yes, another miracle of nature—**your baby's developing immune system, it works hard as a:**

- Shield from sickness and infection.
- Main support in her growth and overall health.
- Key in maintaining natural protective barriers.

The skin is obviously most important for protection, but **another important barrier is the digestive tract, which is home to:**

- 80% of the body's immune cells.⁷
- The gut flora, a delicately balanced community of around 500 different kinds of bacteria.

In a healthy digestive system, part of the task of **keeping baby's immune system and body safe from illness relies on good bacteria (or bacterial cultures)**—they can also help to balance potentially harmful bacteria. One way to help support this protective barrier is to increase the levels of good bacteria in your baby's digestive tract.

Recent research has shown that **breast milk naturally contains probiotics including Bifidobacteria^{8,9}** that:

- Are good bacteria
- Make up to 90% of the naturally occurring bacteria found in the gut flora of healthy, breastfed babies.¹⁰
- Aid in building a healthy digestive tract flora.

- Help with the healthy development of a strong immune system.^{11,12}

These facts alone make it easy to see why **breast milk is an ideal source of probiotics for your baby.**

What are probiotics?

The meaning of “probiotic” is literally “for life”.

Probiotics are live, safe microorganisms, found in food and you’ll also hear them called “natural cultures” or “good bacteria”.

They offer specific health benefits, like aiding in digestion and supporting the immune system, when taken in adequate amounts.¹³

The probiotic *Bifidobacterium lactis* or ***B. lactis* is a common type of Bifidobacteria** and is recognized by Health Canada as a probiotic that contributes to baby’s healthy digestive tract flora.¹⁴ *B. lactis* has also been extensively studied for its health benefits in infants.

Research suggests that, when ingested, probiotics only temporarily reside in the digestive system^{11,13,14} and continued, daily consumption of *B. lactis* is necessary for health benefits.^{14,15}

***B. lactis* has been shown to help increase levels of antibodies,** the immune protectors of your body, and an important part of a healthy baby’s immune system and natural defences.^{15,16,17}

¹¹ All breastfed, full term infants in Canada should receive a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 mg (400 IU).

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