

# How to start complementary feeding

Starting complementary feeding is an exciting time. Here are our top tips on how and when to start baby food from our resident dietitian.

- Most babies are ready for solid foods at around six months. Some signs of readiness include that they can sit up without support, has good control of their head, and shows interest in food when others are eating.
  
- Whether you decide to start on puréed food, finger foods (also known as baby-led weaning) or a combination of both—first foods should be iron-rich.
  
- Feed your baby solid foods only once a day initially, then gradually increase the amount and variety of foods, being responsive to baby's cues.
  
- A rough guideline is to start with about 1-2 teaspoons of food at one meal. Don't rush and follow your baby's hunger and fullness cues.
  
- Work up to 1–2 snacks each day, depending on your little one's appetite, and 2–4 feedings of breast milk and/or baby formula
  
- Your baby is hungrier and more alert first thing in the morning, so it's a good time to try new foods.
  
- Sit baby upright in a high chair with no distractions, like TV, cell phones or tablets.
  
- Give them a little breast milk or formula first to relax them and take the edge off their hunger.

- Experts agree that first foods should be rich in iron. Try meats, meat alternatives, and/or infant cereals that are iron-fortified. At about 6 months, baby has used most of the iron they received from mom.
  
- As your baby starts to explore new foods, you can progress from single-ingredient purées to richer tastes and different textures.
  
- Don't rush. Work towards offering nutritious complementary foods in 2–3 feedings, and 1–2 snacks each day while paying close attention to your little one's hunger cues.
  
- Remember it can take up to ten tries for your baby to accept a new flavour so don't give up!
  
- Keep a feeding schedule stuck on the fridge to track what your baby has tried, and how often.
  
- Try one new food at a time and wait 2 days before introducing each new food to help you recognize if a new food is causing an allergic reaction. You can combine flavours after a couple of weeks once you know they're a hit.
  
- Finger Foods are fun and important for encouraging self-feeding. Offer your baby iron-fortified puffed rice baby cereal, grated cheese, whole grain toast cut into small pieces or strips, well-cooked pasta, or teething biscuits. Let baby decide how much to eat from the foods offered.
  
- Praise baby when they try something new.
  
- Baby's complementary feeding diet should be iron rich and include a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains and starchy foods, dairy, meat, fish and protein foods, and fats.
  
- Variety is key to ensure baby is getting the right nutrients for growth and development, such as iron, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin D and omega 3 fatty acids.
  
- Vegetarian or vegan? Be sure to include a variety of iron-rich foods such as eggs, ground nuts or seeds, soy products (tofu), cereal foods, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils) to ensure they get all the nutrients they need. Speak to your doctor about the best way to feed your baby.

- You can introduce common allergenic foods, like nuts or eggs, when baby is around 6 months old. However, if your baby has eczema or you have a history of allergies in your family, speak to your doctor first.
  
- Foods to avoid? Things that are likely to cause choking – such as round foods like hot dogs and whole grapes, hard fruits and veggies, seeds or nuts, and hard candy. Honey may pose a risk for food poisoning, and is not suitable for babies under 1 year.
  
- Be a good role model. Babies are curious so if you're enjoying food on your plate, they are likely to be more eager try some.
  
- Keep breast milk or formula as the main milk source and save whole (3.25% M.F) cow's milk for after 9-12 months of age, once baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods.

Sources:

Canadian Paediatric Society: Caring for Kids. Feeding your baby in the first year.

[https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/feeding\\_your\\_baby\\_in\\_the\\_first\\_year](https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/feeding_your_baby_in_the_first_year) Accessed August 2020 [1].

Health Canada, Canadian Paediatric Society, Dietitians of Canada, & Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (2014) [Nutrition for healthy term infants: Recommendations from six to 24 months](#) [2].

**Source URL:** <https://www.nestlebaby.ca/en/6-12-months/how-to-start-complementary-feeding>

**Links**

[1] [https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/feeding\\_your\\_baby\\_in\\_the\\_first\\_year%20Accessed%20August%202020](https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/feeding_your_baby_in_the_first_year%20Accessed%20August%202020)

[2] <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guide/resources/infant-feeding/nutrition-healthy-term-infants-recommendations-birth-six-months/6-24-months.html>