



Guide and recipes

for introducing solid food



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Guide and recipes

for introducing solid food

This guide provides practical tips and simple recipes to safely start giving your baby solid food.

See *Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months* for more information.



Breastfeeding

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months and should be continued, with appropriate solid food, for up to the age of 2 or more. Around the age of 6 months, your baby will need solid food to meet all of his or her needs (if born full term and healthy).

Your baby is ready for solid food when he or she is able to:

- hold his or her head up;
- sit up, lean forward, and straighten up;
- try to pick up food and put it in his or her mouth;
- show you that he or she no longer wants food.

Introducing your baby to solid food

Your baby's iron requirements increase around the age of 6 months. This is why your baby's first foods should be rich in iron. Between 6 and 12 months, feed your baby iron-rich foods at least 2 times a day.

Iron-rich foods include:

- meat;
- fish;
- poultry;
- meat alternatives (beans, lentils, eggs, tofu, and peanut or nut butter);
- iron-fortified infant cereal.

Once that iron-rich foods have been introduced, vegetables, fruits, grain products, and some dairy products (e.g. cheese and yogurt) can be introduced

between 6 and 9 months at the same time as a variety of iron-rich foods.

Dairy products do not include whole cow's milk (3.25%), which should only be introduced between 9 and 12 months. Even if fortified, soy beverages and other plant-based beverages such as almond, rice and coconut are not a suitable main source of milk before the age of 2. Honey should not be introduced before the age of 1.



Textures

When introducing food for the first time, serve your baby a variety of soft safe textures

The following are some examples of textures that you may offer your baby:

- lumpy;
- cooked until soft and finely minced, mashed or ground;
- pureed;
- grated;
- bite-size.

From the age of 6 months, you can offer your baby the same nutritious foods that your family eats. You may need to change the texture using a fork, knife, potato masher, food grater, food grinder, food processor or blender. Do not add any salt, salty seasoning or sugar.

Store-bought purées are not needed, as they can be very high in sugar. Homemade recipes provide excellent nutritional value and a wider range of flavours, colours and textures.

Examples of finger foods

WHOLE GRAIN FOODS

Small pieces of toast
Rice
Cooked pasta
Unsalted crackers
Small pieces of flatbread, pita or tortilla

PROTEIN FOODS

Cooked meat, ground or finely minced
Cooked boneless fish, minced or mashed
Canned light* tuna, minced or mashed
Well-cooked legumes (beans, lentils and chickpeas)
Cooked eggs, mashed
Tofu, grated or cut up into small pieces
Cheese, shredded or diced
Cottage cheese

VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

- Cooked vegetables, cut up into small pieces (squash, peas, green or yellow beans, etc.)
- Cooked fruits, cut up into small pieces (apples, peaches, pears, apricots, etc.)
- Bananas, grapes and blueberries, cut up into small pieces
- Apples and pears, grated
- Ripe and soft fruits, cut up into small pieces (pears, avocado, peaches, etc.)



***Avoid choosing canned white tuna,** as it is higher in mercury than light tuna.

Cues that your baby is hungry or has had enough to eat

Pay attention to your baby's cues. Your baby has ways to let you know what he or she wants.

Here are some cues that your baby may be hungry (hunger cues):

- restlessness;
- irritability.

Here are some cues that your baby may be full (satiety cues):

- turns his or her head away;
- refuses to eat;
- is sleepy;
- is playing.

Meal frequency and amount of food

The meal frequency should be adapted to your baby's needs.

- Between 6 and 8 months, offer your baby 2-3 meals a day and 1-2 snacks depending on his or her appetite.
- Between 9 and 11 months, offer your baby up to 3 meals a day and 1-2 snacks, also depending on his or her appetite.

It is recommended to introduce solid foods in small amounts and to pay attention to cues telling you that your baby is hungry or has had enough to eat. The amount of food that your baby eats will increase with age to meet all of his or her needs.

It may vary according to several factors such as:

- how your baby is feeling;
- what is going on around him or her;
- what time of the day it is;
- how much breastmilk your baby got;
- your baby's appetite and eating skills.



Roles and responsibilities of parents and the child

Your role is to offer a variety of nutritious foods, prepared and served safely. You also decide where and at what times to offer food to your baby. No matter how old he or she is, your baby will always decide how much and whether or not he or she eats.

Family meals

Mealtimes are a happy time for families. By bringing your baby to the table, you help him or her develop healthy habits while growing up. Turn off the TV and put toys away so the family can focus on eating and spending time together.



Open cup (glass without a lid)

It is recommended to use an open cup to introduce fluids other than breast milk. This will help your baby learn to control the muscles in his or her mouth and can help to prevent extended bottle feeding.

- Start by offering your baby water in an unbreakable cup.
- Expect lots of spills before your baby is able to control the movement. You can cover your baby with a waterproof bib.
- Help your baby by holding the cup against his or her mouth. Encourage your baby to hold the cup with you.
- Your baby does not need a sippy cup. If your baby uses a sippy cup, it doesn't allow him or her to learn to drink without sipping/sucking.

Water

Breast milk contains the amount of water that your baby needs. However, if your baby is thirsty, you may offer him or her water in an open cup. It is not recommended to offer sweet beverages and fruit juice, even 100% fruit juice. It is preferable to give your baby the whole fruit rather than the juice.



Fish and Shellfish

Most fish contain Omega-3 fats that are essential for health, which is why it's important to eat them. However, fish contain mercury, some more than others. Mercury, even in small quantities, can cause serious health problems and is dangerous to the development of young children.

Limit the consumption of certain fish:

Fish	6 to 12 months	1 to 4 years
Canned white tuna (Albacore)	No more than 40 g/week (Size: approx. ½ a deck of cards)	No more than 75 g/week (Size: approx. 1 deck of cards)
Escolar • Marlin Orange roughy Fresh or frozen tuna Shark • Swordfish	No more than 40 g/month (Size: approx. ½ a deck of cards)	No more than 75 g/month (Size: approx. 1 deck of cards)

Sport fishing

Fish caught in the lakes and rivers of New Brunswick may contain too much mercury **for children less than 12 years of age**.

The consumption of brook trout or speckled trout **under 25 cm** caught in a lake or river in New Brunswick must be limited to a total consumption of **75 grams per month**.

The larger the fish, the more mercury it contains.

Avoid giving your child the fish below:

- Brook trout or speckled trout **over 25 cm**
- Burbot
- Catfish (Brown Bullhead)
- Lake trout or lake char
- Landlocked salmon (Ouananiche)
- Muskellunge
- Pickerel
- Smallmouth bass
- Striped bass
- White perch
- Yellow perch

The fish and seafood below have a low mercury content and contain Omega-3s:

- Anchovy
- Arctic char
- Atlantic mackerel
- Canned light tuna
- Capelin
- Crab
- Clams
- Hake
- Herring
- Mullet
- Mussels
- Oysters
- Pollock
- Rainbow trout
- Salmon
- Smelt
- Lake whitefish
- Shrimp



Food to avoid

Eggs, meat and fish should be fully cooked to prevent food poisoning.

Do not offer your baby the following foods before the age of 4 to prevent choking:

- peanuts and other nuts, either **whole or broken**;
- fish **with bones**;
- whole fresh grapes and raisins;
- carrots **cut into rounds**;
- seeds;
- popcorn;
- hot dogs;
- marshmallows;
- hard candies, cough drops, gum;
- snacks using toothpicks or skewers.



Most common food allergens

People may be allergic to any food, but some foods are more frequently associated with allergic reactions than others. There is no evidence that the introduction of these foods should be delayed. They can be introduced from the age of 6 months.

The following table lists the most common food allergens:

Foods	Examples of food allergens
Eggs	eggs, pasta and egg noodles
Milk*	cheese, yogurt
Mustard	mustard, tomato sauce
Peanuts	peanut butter
Seafood	shrimp, mussels, scallops, lobster
Fish	salmon, cod, tuna, trout
Sesame	sesame butter
Soy	tofu
Sulfites	canned or frozen fruits and vegetables
Nuts	almond butter
Wheat	cereal, bread



*Do not introduce cow's milk before the age of 9 months.

When introducing a food in this list, offer only one food per day and wait at least 2 days before serving other foods in this category. Once a food has been offered the first time, continue serving it to your baby regularly.

Homemade food for your baby

Preparation

Before starting, wash with warm soapy water:

- your hands;
- your work surface;
- all the accessories that you will use.



Practical accessories



Cutting board and knife



Saucepan



Food processor • Blender



Measuring cup



Ice cube tray



Small knife • Utensils
• Peeler



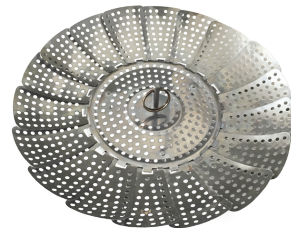
Potato masher



Resealable freezer bag



Plastic wrap



Steamer basket

Cooking vegetables or fruits

1. Thoroughly wash, peel and slice vegetables or fruits.
2. Remove pits and seeds if any.
3. Boil or steam vegetables or fruits until **tender** as needed.
4. Drain and keep cooking water.
5. Grind, mash, chop, purée or cut up vegetables or fruits using cooking water to adjust texture.

Here are a few examples of vegetables and fruits.

VEGETABLES

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Asparagus | Broccoli | Carrots |
| Cauliflower | Brussels sprouts | Beets |
| Squash | Zucchini | Yellow or green beans |
| Corn | Turnips (rutabaga) | Sweet potatoes |
| Potatoes | | |

FRUITS

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Apricots | Pineapple | Blueberries |
| Cherries | Strawberries | Raspberries |
| Mango | Blackberries | Nectarines |
| Peaches | Pears | Apples |
| Prunes, plums | | |



Cooking meat, poultry or fish

1. Cook meat, poultry or fish.
2. Remove bones, fat and skin from the meat, poultry or fish.
3. Mash, chop, purée or cut up meat, poultry or fish using cooking water to adjust texture.

The following are some examples of meat, poultry and fish.

MEAT

Lamb
Beef
Pork
Veal

POULTRY

Turkey
Chicken

FISH

Haddock
Cod
Salmon
Tilapia
Trout



Cooking meat alternatives



Tofu

You do not need to cook tofu before serving it to your baby. Choose plain tofu. Cut, mash, chop or purée tofu using water if needed to adjust texture.

Legumes

(e.g., edamames, beans, lentils and peas [dry peas and chickpeas])

- Soak dry beans in water overnight. Discard the water that was used
- Lentils and dry peas do not need to be soaked in water before cooking.
- Cover legumes with fresh water and cook them until tender. Discard cooking water.
- If using canned legumes, choose plain ones and rinse them well before use.
- Cut, mash, chop or purée legumes using water to adjust texture as needed.

Eggs

- Cook eggs until the white and yolk are firm and well cooked.
- Cut, chop, mash or purée eggs using breastmilk as needed to adjust texture.



Safe storage of baby food

Improper storage of food can make your baby sick

To keep your baby healthy:

- heat and serve only the amount that you think your baby will eat;
- do not store food that has been reheated;
- do not leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours;
- if you want to freeze homemade baby food, you may use an ice cube tray to have smaller individual servings; once frozen, you may place them in a freezer bag;
- keep food for the length of time indicated in the following sections.

Homemade food

- Leftovers containing meat, eggs, meat alternatives, poultry or fish can be kept in the fridge for 3-4 days.
- Homemade purées with vegetables, fruits or meat alternatives can be kept in the fridge for 2 days and in the freezer for 1 month.
- Homemade purées with meat, poultry, fish or eggs can be kept in the fridge for 1 day or in the freezer for 1 month.

See the Safe food storage page at www.canada.ca for more information.

Store-bought baby food (baby food jars)

- Check the best before date.
- Once a container is open:
 - vegetables and fruits can be kept in the fridge up to 2 days;
 - meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and meal combinations can be kept in the fridge up to 24 hours.

Thawing and reheating homemade food

The safest technique to thaw food is to put it in the fridge. It can then be reheated in a bowl of hot water or double boiler.

If food is reheated in the microwave, take the following precautions to prevent “hot spots” that could burn your baby’s mouth:

1. Reheat food in a small microwave-safe bowl;
2. Thoroughly stir food and wait at least 30 seconds;
3. Check the temperature of the food on your wrist or on the back of your hand before starting to feed your baby.

Recipes

Oatmeal and buckwheat pancakes

Ingredients

- 1 cup (250 mL) of buckwheat flour
- ½ cup (125 mL) of oats
- ½ cup (125 mL) of iron-fortified infant cereal
- 1 tsp. (5 mL) of baking powder
- 2 cups (500 mL) of water
- Vanilla extract to taste
- Cooking oil

Directions

1. In a bowl, combine all dry ingredients.
2. Add water and vanilla and mix.
3. Pour approximately 5 mL of oil in a skillet.
4. Pour approximately ¼ to 1/3 cup of the mixture for one pancake.
5. Cook over medium heat (3-4 minutes on each side).
6. Optional: serve pancakes with fruit compote.



Breastmilk French toast

Ingredients

- 2 slices of bread (of your choice)
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup (60 mL) of breastmilk
- 1 tbsp. (15 mL) of iron-fortified infant cereal
- Vanilla extract and/or cinnamon to taste

Directions

1. In a bowl, combine egg, breastmilk, fortified infant cereal, and vanilla extract and/or cinnamon.
2. Dip the bread slices into the mixture.
3. Cook the bread in a non-stick skillet until well done.
4. Serve French toast cut into strips, small squares or diagonally (two triangles).



Iron-rich cookies

Ingredients

- ½ cup (125 mL) of non-hydrogenated margarine
- ½ cup (125 mL) of banana purée (about 1 banana)
- 2 tsp. (10 mL) of vanilla
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) of white or whole wheat flour
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) of iron-fortified infant cereal
- 1 tsp. (5 mL) of baking powder

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (190°C).
2. Grease or cover two cookie sheets with parchment paper.
3. In a bowl, beat margarine and banana purée until creamy.
4. Gradually add egg and vanilla.
5. In another bowl, combine the other ingredients. Fold into the first mixture.
6. Make 24 small balls of dough, place them on the cookie sheets, and flatten them a little.
7. Bake for 10 minutes.

Tip

Part of the flour required in your recipes can be replaced with a double amount of iron-fortified infant cereal. For instance, in a muffin recipe requiring 2 cups of whole-wheat flour, you may use 1 cup of whole-wheat flour and 2 cups of iron-fortified infant cereal.



Mini frittatas

Ingredients

- 8 eggs
- ½ cup (125 mL) of milk
- ¼ tsp. (1.25 mL) of pepper
- 1 cup (250 mL) of shredded cheese of your choice
- 2 green onions (white part only), finely chopped (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. In a bowl, beat the eggs, milk and pepper. Add cheese and green onions. Mix thoroughly. Pour the mixture equally into 12 non-stick muffin tins.
3. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until the eggs are well cooked. Slide a knife blade around all frittatas to unmold. Let cool for 5 minutes or serve at room temperature.



Mini lentil loaves

Ingredients

- 4 cups of green lentils, cooked, or 2 x 19 oz (541 mL) cans of lentils, drained
- 1 medium onion, finely minced
- 1 cup (250 mL) of mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1 slice of whole wheat bread, crumbled
- ¾ cup (180 mL) of tomato sauce
- 1 stick or 2/3 cup of celery, finely chopped
- 2 large eggs
- ¼ cup (60 mL) of parsley, chopped
- ½ tsp. (2.5 mL) of oregano
- 1 tsp. (5 mL) of basil
- Pepper to taste
- 1 cup (250 mL) of tomato sauce for topping

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients well, except for the tomato sauce that will be used for topping.
3. Pour the mixture into 12 non-stick muffin tins and press firmly.
4. Bake for 20 minutes.
5. Let cool for a few minutes and unmold the loaves using a knife blade.
6. Top each mini loaf with a little tomato sauce.

Tip

Serve the mini loaves with whole wheat pasta or brown rice, a little tomato sauce, and various, colourful vegetables. These mini loaves may easily be frozen as individual servings. Wrap them separately in plastic wrap and place them in the same freezer bag.

References

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