



# ONE BITE AT A TIME

Introducing  
your baby to  
solid foods

## It's Go Time!

Starting solids can be both an exciting and anxious time for parents. This guide was created to provide you with the knowledge and confidence to nourish your baby. Getting started is the hardest part, but hang tight! You and your baby will figure things out – one day, one meal at a time!

If your healthcare provider has given you this guide, it likely means your baby is ready to start eating solid foods (or will be ready soon). That means your baby is showing all of the following signs:

- Sitting with minimal support for at least 20-30 seconds
- Has good head and neck control
- Can pick up objects and bring them to their mouth
- Shows interest in food
- Fading tongue thrust reflex (causes the tongue to stick out when touched)

# Approaches to Feeding

Introducing baby to solid foods does not mean decreasing baby's milk intake from the start. Instead, you are adding solid foods to baby's feeding schedule and gradually replacing breastmilk or formula with these foods.



There are three basic approaches to feeding babies:

- 1 Spoon-feeding:**  
Foods are pureed or mashed. A parent or caregiver feeds baby.
- 2 Baby-led weaning:**  
Babies are introduced to finger foods. They learn to self-feed from the start.
- 3 Combination:**  
Babies are spoon-fed and introduced to finger foods at the same time.

## FED IS BEST!

Pick the method that works best for you and your baby. Feeding in a responsive way is more important than the approach. This means following your baby's hunger and fullness cues.



BABY WANTS MORE!

### Hunger cues:

- Opens mouth and leans toward food
- Gets excited when they see food
- Reaches out to grab for food
- Eats at a consistent pace



BABY IS DONE!

### Fullness cues:

- Pushes food away
- Spits food out
- Closes mouth when food is offered
- Turns head away from food
- Gets distracted easily
- Throws food

## MAIN TAKEAWAY:

Creating a positive and safe eating environment is more important than how much of every nutrient your baby is eating. Follow your baby's signals and don't push them to eat a particular food or amount of food. Your baby may eat more or less than what you served. That is perfectly OK! Focus on making mealtimes about enjoying each other's company!

## Setting Expectations & Getting Started

It takes time to develop the skills needed to chew and swallow. Stay calm and be patient! Eating during the first month is for practice and exploration. If your baby has wet and dirty diapers regularly, appears alert and happy, and is tracking on their growth curve, they are probably getting “enough.”

### Don't worry, that's normal!



Smashing, squeezing, and throwing are all part of learning!



Making funny faces doesn't necessarily mean they don't like the food. It's just new to them!



Spitting food out is an essential part of learning! You want your baby to spit out food that isn't chewed properly or isn't safe to swallow.



Babies don't need teeth to enjoy soft-cooked foods. Their gums are super strong and capable of breaking down soft-cooked foods.

### Bottom line:

**Keep offering foods in a variety of ways.**

This provides plenty of opportunities for your baby to learn to enjoy food!

### During mealtime

- Sit down and eat together. Role modeling is powerful because babies learn by watching.
- Start with one meal a day – it doesn't matter which meal. As your baby starts to eat more (and you have eased into this new routine), add the second meal. Work up to three meals per day by 9-10 months of age.
- Set them up for success by ensuring your baby isn't overly tired, hungry, or full. In general, you want to offer solid foods about 30-45 minutes after breastmilk or formula. Play around with the timing and find what works for you and your baby.
- If your baby is fussy or cries when you bring them to the highchair, take a break or try a different location or set-up.
- Ensure baby is sitting comfortably in their highchair. Baby's hips, knees, and feet should all be at a 90-degree angle. They should not be tilting back or leaning.



# How to Introduce Potential Food Allergens

Feeding babies peanut-containing foods and eggs early and often reduces the risk of developing allergies to these foods. Experts recommend introducing infant-safe peanut-containing foods as early as 4-6 months of age\*. Egg and other potential allergens should be added to baby's diet starting around six months, once your baby has successfully eaten a few other foods. It is better for your baby if you introduce these foods early!

## The top 9 allergens are:



COW'S MILK



EGGS



PEANUT



TREE NUT



SOY



WHEAT



FISH



SHELLFISH



SESAME

## Introduce these foods...

- one at a time
- with other foods
- early in the day
- well before a nap
- then wait 2-3 days before introducing the next potential allergen

## What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction? What should I look for?

### Mild symptoms can include:

- a new rash
- a few hives around the mouth or face

### More severe symptoms can include any of the following alone or in combination:

- lip swelling
- vomiting
- widespread hives (welts) over the body
- face or tongue swelling
- any difficulty breathing
- wheezing
- repetitive coughing
- change in skin color (pale, blue)
- sudden tiredness/lethargy/seeming limp



Most allergic reactions happen within minutes, but can take up to two hours. If you have concerns about your baby's response to a food, seek immediate medical attention or call 911. The most common food allergy symptoms for a baby include hives and vomiting.

\* If baby has moderate to severe eczema or an existing egg allergy, discuss it with a pediatrician first.



# Key Nutrients for Growing Bodies

## Macronutrients



**Protein** serves as the building blocks for growth and repair of the body's cells and helps support a healthy immune system.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *eggs, meat, chicken, fish, tofu, beans, lentils, peanut and nut butters, seeds*



**Fat** is essential for optimal growth and development – especially for the brain and nervous system. Fats are also the building blocks of hormones.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *avocado, olive oil, egg yolk, whole milk yogurt, salmon, sardines, peanut and nut butters, seeds*



**Carbohydrates** are the preferred energy source for the brain, nervous system, and muscles.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *whole grains (cereal, pasta, quinoa, oatmeal, bread), lentils, beans, fruits, starchy vegetables (sweet potatoes, butternut squash)*

## Micronutrients



**Iron** helps with brain development and blood circulation. At around six months of age, baby's iron needs drastically increase to keep up with their rapid growth and development.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *meat, seafood, poultry, iron-fortified breakfast cereals and breads, white beans, lentils, spinach, kidney beans, peas, nuts*



**Zinc** is an important mineral for the immune system. Many food sources of zinc are also sources of iron.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *meat, poultry, seafood, fortified breakfast cereals, dairy, eggs, nuts, beans*



**Choline** plays a critical role in early brain development. Eggs are one of the most concentrated food sources of choline.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *eggs, meat, fish, poultry, dairy, kidney beans, potatoes, cruciferous vegetables (Brussels sprouts, broccoli)*



**Iodine** is a major component of thyroid hormones, which are needed for regulating growth, body temperature, blood cell production, metabolism, and nerve and muscle function.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *seaweed, fish, shellfish, dairy, eggs*



**Vitamin B12** is important for supporting brain development and producing healthy red blood cells. It is also necessary for making DNA.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *meat, fish, dairy, eggs, fortified nutritional yeast*



**Vitamin D** is involved in immune health and building strong bones. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all babies receive daily supplementation because it is difficult to meet the recommended intake.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *fortified dairy products, fortified cereals, egg yolk, fatty fish*



**Omega-3 Fatty Acids** are important for growth and development, and brain and eye health. There are three types of omega-3 fatty acids: ALA, DHA, and EPA.

**FOOD SOURCES:** *salmon, sardines, anchovies, canned tuna, shrimp, omega-3 enriched eggs, flaxseed, edamame, walnuts, chia seeds*

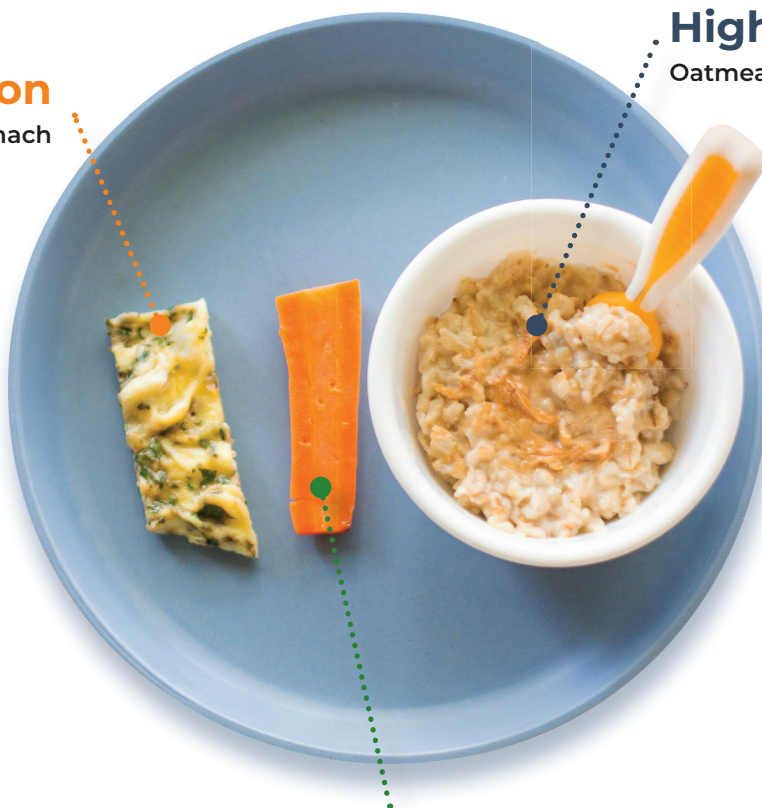
## How to Build a Well-Balanced Plate

Here is a general formula for meals to help meet your baby's nutrient needs:

Food with iron:	+	A high-energy food:	+	Fruit or Vegetable:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beans</li><li>• Eggs</li><li>• Fortified grains</li><li>• Lentils</li><li>• Nuts and seeds</li><li>• Poultry</li><li>• Red meat</li><li>• Seafood</li><li>• Tofu</li><li>• Whole grains</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avocado</li><li>• Bread</li><li>• Cheese</li><li>• Full-fat yogurt</li><li>• Nut butters or finely chopped nuts</li><li>• Oats</li><li>• Oils</li><li>• Pasta</li><li>• Quinoa</li><li>• Starchy vegetables (e.g. sweet potatoes, pumpkin, butternut squash)</li><li>• Thinned peanut butter</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applesauce</li><li>• Banana</li><li>• Beets</li><li>• Bell peppers</li><li>• Broccoli</li><li>• Carrots</li><li>• Cauliflower</li><li>• Green peas</li><li>• Kiwi</li><li>• Mangoes</li><li>• Pears</li><li>• Spinach</li><li>• Tomatoes</li><li>• Strawberries</li></ul>

**Food with iron**  
Scrambled eggs with spinach

**High-energy food**  
Oatmeal mixed with peanut butter



**Vegetable/Fruit**  
Steamed carrots





### What's good for baby is good for the family!








You don't have to make separate meals – simply adjust portion sizes for each family member. For baby, start with a small amount and offer more depending on baby's hunger cues. In the plate above, adults can enjoy a vegetable omelet (the American Heart Association recommends eggs as part of a heart-healthy diet for healthy adults) or a bowl of oatmeal mixed with peanut butter, too!

# Serving Developmentally Appropriate Foods

A list of potential choking hazards is below. Some foods can be modified to be safe for your baby. But please note that some foods should be avoided until your baby reaches a certain age.

 <b>Potential Choking Hazard</b>	 <b>Modified/Safe to Serve</b>
<b>Whole nuts and seeds</b>	<b>Finely grind whole nuts and seeds</b>
<b>Hard cheese</b>	<b>Grate</b>
<b>Raw/hard fruits and vegetables (like an apple or carrot)</b>	<b>Cook, grate, or thinly slice</b>
<b>Round foods (like cherry tomatoes or grapes)</b>	<b>Cut into quarters</b>
<b>Large beans and peas</b>	<b>Mash or flatten</b>
<b>Sticky foods (like nut butters)</b>	<b>Thin it out with breastmilk or formula; stir into foods like oatmeal or yogurt</b>
<b>Hot dogs</b>	<b>Cut lengthwise and into small pieces</b>

## Foods to Avoid

-  Cow's milk can be added to recipes but should not be offered as a beverage until one year of age
-  Honey should not be served to babies under one year of age because it can lead to botulism
-  Added sugar should be avoided until two years of age
-  Added salt
-  Hard or sticky candy
-  Chewing gum
-  Popcorn

## Choking vs. Gagging

It is important to know the difference between gagging and choking.

Gagging is a normal and expected part of learning to eat. It serves as a safety mechanism to prevent choking.

Choking is when the airway is blocked and baby has difficulty breathing.

Signs of choking include:

- Baby appears panicked or troubled
- Inability to cry or make noise
- Lips and/or skin turn blue
- Loss of consciousness or goes limp



One of the most important things you can do to protect your child is to take an **Infant First Aid and CPR class!**

The best way to reduce choking risk is to have baby sit upright when eating. They should never be running, walking, playing, or lying down while eating.



## You are ready for your baby's feeding journey!

Together, you and your baby will figure things out – one day, one meal at a time. Be patient and don't give up. You can do this!

Refer to this guide as often as you need and if you have any concerns or questions, please talk to your pediatrician.

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**EGG  
NUTRITION  
CENTER**

[incredibleegg.org/nutrition](https://incredibleegg.org/nutrition)



[preventpeanutallergies.org](https://preventpeanutallergies.org)

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