

When and How

Solid foods are any food or drink other than breastmilk or formula.

When

Your baby is ready for solid foods when they:

- are around 6 months old (4-6 months corrected age if preterm)
- can sit up in a chair with a back
- have good head control when sitting
- can open their mouth to accept foods

For the first 6 months, breastmilk (or formula) gives your baby the nutrition they need to grow and develop. All babies and children need a daily 400 IU vitamin D supplement.

Around 6 months, babies:

- need solid foods for more vitamins and minerals, like iron
- need their usual amount of breastmilk or formula
- are ready to learn to eat new textures and flavours

Some babies may be ready a little earlier than 6 months.

Starting solid foods too early? Your baby may:

- not get enough nutrition from breastmilk or formula
- not be ready to chew and swallow safely

Starting solid foods too late? Your baby may:

- not get enough vitamins and minerals
- be more likely to develop food allergies
- have trouble with new textures and flavours

How

How you and your baby interact around feeding and eating can help your baby listen to their body. You and your baby have separate roles:

- Your role is to decide what foods are offered, when to offer them, and where to offer them.
- Your baby's role is to decide if and how much they will eat from the foods offered. It's ok for your baby to eat more on some days and less on others.

Signs your baby is hungry:

- leans toward or reaches for food
- opens their mouth when you offer food
- gets excited when they see food



Signs your baby is full:

- turns their head away from the food
- closes their mouth when you offer food
- pushes the food away with their hands



Gagging is a natural reflex and is common for babies when starting solid foods. Gagging happens when food slips to the back of the tongue before a person is ready to swallow and is forced back into the mouth. It is not the same as choking. For more information search "gagging" at

<https://peas.albertahealthservices.ca>



How to

When choosing how to offer food to your baby, consider:

- Babies learn by getting messy! Babies may need to see, touch, smell, and taste a new food many times. Let your baby touch and explore new foods to help them get used to new textures and flavours.
- Include your baby at family meals. This helps them learn that mealtime is a time to come together and connect.
- Encourage your baby to feed themselves when they show interest. Help them when they need it.
- Some babies may need to start with pureed and mashed foods. Offer food on a little spoon and allow them to practice feeding themselves when ready.
- Modify or avoid foods that your baby can't safely chew or swallow.

Baby-led weaning is starting solid foods with whole pieces of food that a baby feeds themselves. It means not using purees or spoon-feeding. Keep in mind that:

- Many babies can't feed themselves or chew and swallow larger pieces of food when starting solid foods. They might need a bit more time to practice with other textures first.
- If you try baby-led weaning, make sure to include foods with iron that your baby can safely eat.

How much

There is no exact amount of food that is best for all babies. Your baby knows how much they need. Respect your baby's signs of hunger and fullness.

- Start by offering a few spoons or bites. Give your baby more food if they show you they're hungry. Stop feeding when they show you they're full.
- Your baby will eat different amounts from meal-to-meal and day-to-day.

How often

Offer solid food at the same time as breastmilk or formula feedings, or in between.

Age	Offer solids
At the start	1 time a day
6-8 months	2-3 times a day
9-11 months	3-4 times a day
1 year and older	3 meals and up to 2-3 snacks each day

Breastmilk or formula will continue to be your baby's main source of nutrition as they learn to eat solid foods. Around 9-12 months of age, as your baby eats more solid foods, you may notice they drink less breastmilk or formula.

For more information



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on [ahs.ca/811](#).
- Visit [ahs.ca/nutrition](#).
- Visit [www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca](#) and search "feeding your baby."