

# Your Baby's First Tastes

## Starting Solid Foods

Starting solid foods is an exciting time for you and your baby. Your baby gradually moves from breastmilk and/or formula to foods (i.e. meats, cereals, vegetables, fruits) with different tastes, textures and temperatures. Introducing new foods to your baby takes time and patience. The gentle approach on page 2 follows your baby's cues and lets them explore a new food before eating their first spoonful. This allows your baby to be in control and set their own pace for trying new foods.

- Messy eating is okay! To make clean-up easier, place a shower curtain, towel or sheet on the floor, or feed your baby in their diaper and rinse off after.
- Between the developmental age of 6 and 12 months, much of your baby's nutrition still comes from breastmilk and/or formula.
- Give your baby 1 new food at a time. Wait 2 days before adding the next new food. This makes it easier to tell if your baby is allergic to the new food.
- Use the same steps to introduce new tastes, temperatures, and textures, for example moving from purees to mashed foods.

## Environment and Routine

- Eat together as a family whenever possible. Aim to create an enjoyable and pleasant setting for your meals. Try not to watch TV or look at other screens.
- Try to set up a routine of 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day. Aim for 15-20 minutes for meals, and 5-10 minutes for snacks.
- Say to your baby "It's time for snack, let's clean up the toys" or "Let's go to your high chair." This helps them get ready to eat.
- Try first tastes at the start of a snack time in a familiar place, like your own home. Once the food is accepted, then offer it at meals or in other settings.
- When offering a new food, choose a time when you and your baby won't feel rushed.



## Is my baby ready?

At around 6 months of age, most babies are ready to try solid foods. They have the motor skills they need to eat, and their stomach is able to handle solid foods.

## Signs your baby is ready:

- has head control
- able to sit briefly
- leans forward with mouth open
- has interest in solid foods

### Steps

#### 1. Sit

- Make sure your baby is sitting up and safely in their high chair.
- Ensure the high chair supports your baby's back, and the foot rest supports their feet.
- Use a tray or pull their high chair up to the table.

#### 2. Look and Smell

- Place the bowl of food on the tray or table to allow your baby to smell and see the food.
- Include your baby at the dinner table so that they can watch you eat. Your baby may show interest in what you are eating.
- Have your baby sit in the kitchen while you're cooking so they can see and smell the food.

#### 3. Touch with Hands

- Spoon a small amount of food on the tray.
- Give your baby time to touch and explore how the food feels on their fingers and hands.
- Talk about how the food feels: dry, wet, hard, soft, cold, warm.

#### 4. Taste

- When ready, your baby will put their fingers into their mouth to taste the food.
- You can also provide a spoon or washable toy as a way to taste the food.
- It's okay if they look surprised, gag or spit as they taste the food for the first time.
- Talk about the food they're eating and its texture, taste or temperature: "*Mashed banana is sweet.*"
- Try not to ask if the food was yummy or say "*it's good.*"

#### 5. Feed Baby

- After your baby has tasted the food on their fingers, offer the food on a baby spoon.
- Eat a spoonful of food to show your baby how it's done. Take note of how they react: are they interested?
- Bring the spoon near their mouth. If they open their mouth and lean in, then gently bring the spoon to their lips.
- It's okay if they don't open their mouth, turn their head, or look away. They are telling you they aren't ready for the food just yet.
- Let your baby feed themselves with fingers or a spoon whenever possible.

### Relationship

- Coming together at mealtimes lets families eat, connect and build relationships with each other.
- Avoid using rewards or distractors, such as toys and screens. They take your baby's focus away from truly experiencing the food.
- Notice how you feel: are you calm, happy, excited, anxious, rushed, sad or angry? Babies sense and react to how you feel. Think of what you can do before a meal to be emotionally ready.
- How does your baby feel at mealtime? Are they awake, alert, calm, and interested?
- Watch for and respond to your baby's hunger and fullness cues.
- Respect their response. It's okay if they decide not to taste or eat a new food.



### Parent's Role

- set a routine for when and where you offer food
- choose what foods to offer

### Baby's Role

- decide if they will eat
- decide how much they will eat

---

### Additional Notes:

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at **811**.

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction, or treatment. If you have questions, talk with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.