

GET UP & GROW

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD



First foods: Food from home



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing



Introducing solids

At around six months of age, a diet of breastmilk or formula alone no longer meets infants' nutritional requirements. Other foods are needed to complement milk-feeds, and at this age infants are ready to start learning the skills needed for eating solid foods, and to experience new tastes and textures. These skills form a foundation for future eating behaviours and preferences.

Talk to early childhood staff and carers about the kinds of foods that your child is eating at home. Staff and carers will also be able to tell you what your child has eaten during the day, and whether they are enjoying any new foods.



What foods to introduce...

Foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits the infant provided the texture is suitable for the infant's stage of development.

Stage	Examples of foods that can be consumed
First foods (from around six months)	Iron rich foods, including fortified cereals (e.g. rice), vegetables (e.g. legumes, soy beans, lentils), fish, liver, meat and poultry, cooked plain tofu
Other nutritious foods to be introduced before 12 months	Cooked or raw vegetables (e.g. carrot, potato, tomato), fruit (e.g. apple, banana, melon), whole egg, cereals (e.g. wheat, oats), bread, pasta, nut pastes, toast fingers and rusks, dairy foods such as full-fat cheese, custards and yoghurt
From 12 to 24 months	Family foods Full-cream pasteurised milk

There is no need to add salt, sugar or other flavouring to infant foods. Pre-boiled cooled water or cow's milk can be added if liquid is needed while pureeing or mashing.

Choking risks for infants

Some foods are choking risks for young children whose teeth and chewing skills are still developing.

To reduce the risk of choking:

- Only offer foods with textures that your child is ready for. Start with smooth and soft foods, progress to minced foods, and then finally family foods.
- Be sure to grate, cook or mash apples, carrots and other hard fruits or vegetables before offering them to your child.
- Whole nuts, popcorn and other hard, small, round and/or sticky solid foods should not be served to young children at all.

**'Some foods are
choking risks for
young children...'**



How to introduce solids

While solids are being introduced, milk-feeding should continue as well. Breastmilk should continue to be the main milk drink for infants up to 12 months of age (or longer if you wish). If breastfeeding has ceased, infant formula should be the main milk drink for babies up to 12 months.

As long as iron rich foods are included in first foods, foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits the infant. The order and number of foods being introduced is not important. Slow introduction of solid foods is not necessary.

Bringing food to the early childhood setting

- Prepare small amounts of one or two different foods for your child to eat in the setting.
- Provide finger foods so your child can become more involved in feeding themselves.
- Provide expressed breastmilk or formula along with small amounts of food. Your baby will still need to have feeds of milk.
- When transporting your baby's food, keep it cool by using an insulated container or lunch bag, with an ice brick or frozen water bottle inside.

Commercial baby food is fine to provide sometimes – just be sure to offer your baby a variety of flavours and textures. Babies' eating skills develop quickly, and they will soon be able to manage lumpy, mashed and finger foods.



10074 April 2013

For more information

Raising Children Network
www.raisingchildren.net.au

www.health.gov.au

All information in this publication is correct as at April 2013