

6–12 months



Parent Tips

- For the next six months, babies will learn through tasting, smelling and touching food. **Making faces or spitting out new foods is normal.**
- **Expect mealtime to be messy.**
- Set regular feeding times with baby. Some days baby will eat less than other days. Let baby be the guide. Do not force your baby to eat.

Feeding Advice

- Continue breastfeeding on demand.
- If you are breastfeeding or formula feeding, let your baby decide how much to drink.
- The amount of milk they drink will decrease as they eat more solid foods.
- Ask your child's doctor about Vitamin D supplementation.

Introducing food

- Offer new foods like soft veggies when your child is most hungry. Offer new foods with familiar foods.
- Your child may like something different from you. Be sure to offer lots of different fruits and vegetables.
- Stay positive. Don't be surprised if you have to offer a new food many times for acceptance.
- This is your chance to let baby explore with their hands, tongue and eyes.

Self-feeding with finger foods*

- Mealtimes: Offer new colors, flavors, textures and smells. Give small tastes.
- Enjoy family meals. Place your baby in a booster seat or high chair at the table. Let babies feed themselves as much as possible.
- Never bribe, reward or comfort your baby with food.
- Baby will let you know when they are done – tugging at their bib, turning their head or pushing away the plate or spoon.

What should baby be drinking?

- Around nine months, trade bottle for sippy cup. Gradually move to drinks in a regular cup.
- At one year, offer milk at meals and water in between meals. Juice decreases baby's appetite. Juice is not necessary.
- Soft drinks, fruit punch, sports drinks or other sweetened drinks are not good for baby.

Activity Advice

- Enjoy watching your baby crawl, reach, play with toys or walk.
- Play simple games together, like hiding or rolling balls.
- Use all five senses to play by dancing to music, smelling new things, looking at colors and hand or clapping games.
- Screens like TV, computers, tablets, video games and cell phones can take away from time to move and explore.
- Help build their words by talking to them. Ask baby what they see, read to them and tell stories together.

Sleep Advice

- Continue a calming sleep routine with low lights, a warm bath, and **reading** together.
- No eating or screens before bed.
- It is normal and best for babies at this age to sleep about 14 hours each day.

*Beware of choking hazards (ask your healthcare provider).

Play with a Purpose: 6–12 months

This is a happy time for your baby!

- Babies laugh, screech, kick when they see you coming.

Watching Your Baby

- Watch your baby study new things with all five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, feel).
- At first, your baby will point, screech, babble, and shake their head to show hunger or feeling full. Gradually they will use sounds, then words.
- Point out colors and count what's on the plate.
- Around 9 months they learn how to use their thumb and first finger to pick up small, soft food chunks, such as pieces of cooked sweet potato, banana, pear or multigrain Cheerios.

Fun at Mealtimes

- Talk or sing when you sit with them. Ask questions and point. Wait to let baby make sounds. “Talk” back and forth.
- Put new and different foods and flavors on baby's finger or fist. Let the baby sit with you when you eat.
- Offer your baby lots of colors, textures, smells, and tastes. Let baby squish, drop, splash, lick, and mix them up.

Play with a Purpose

Every day, set aside some time for floor play:

- **Talk** – Say out loud what you see them doing, like “That's a banana. Are you squishing it?” When they babble or make sounds, talk back to them.
- **Big muscles** (legs, back, arms) – Put things just out of reach to make them roll, scoot, crawl or pull up to get them.
- **Hands and fingers** – Give them toys they can grab that feel rough, smooth, soft, furry. Offer things that light up or make sound (flash light, rattle, bean bag, wrapping paper).



Try This!

As you offer any new food, describe the food using all five senses. Say “Mmm, tasty,” then put a bite in your mouth and smile.

What Comes Next?

- By 24 months, your child should learn to eat the same foods that your family does.
- Be aware of your baby's habits and tastes – they will continue to change.
- Keep regular mealtimes, snack times, play times, nap times, reading times, and bed times. Routine is better for baby and easier for you.

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