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).
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 Mealtime**

- 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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