

# Introducing solids

## Feeding from 6 months

### Remember...

- Start solids at around six months.
- Puree food and make it smooth by adding breastmilk or formula.
- Start with a single serve of baby rice cereal only.
- Add fruit, vegetables and meat gradually.
- Increase the amount of food you offer as your baby grows.
- Brush your baby's teeth twice a day.
- Introduce cooled boiled water from a cup.
- Continue breastfeeding on demand, or formula feeding.
- Check your baby's growth regularly.

### How to start

- Choose a time when your baby is happy, you are calm and have time to focus on your baby.
- Start with a single grain iron enriched baby cereal, such as rice cereal (it will say this on the box). Cereals with wheat are not suitable at this early stage. Vegetables, fruits, meats and poultry are then gradually introduced in any order that suits. Young babies can eat meat as long as it is soft and easy to swallow.
- Make the food smooth and mushy by adding breastmilk or formula. This may mean pureeing food or pushing it through a sieve.
- Do not add sugar, honey or salt. Babies have very sensitive taste buds and added salt can be bad for their kidneys.
- Offer about 2–3 teaspoons of solids AFTER a breast or formula feed. Slowly increase this over the next few days as your baby gets used to solids. Continue to breastfeed or formula feed on demand as you were doing before you introduced solids.
- As a guide, offer solids twice a day for the first week and three times a day from the second week onwards.
- Don't put the spoon or food in your mouth before giving it to your baby as this will help transfer the germs that cause tooth decay to your baby.
- If your baby refuses solids, don't worry and try again in a couple of days.
- Start with a single food and introduce new foods one at a time. Vary the foods given so that you know your baby is getting a mix of nutrients. Once single foods have been introduced successfully, you can start to make mixed meals, eg. rice cereal, minced meat and vegetables.
- Cows milk as a drink should not be introduced until 12 months. Cows milk can be added to food from 9 months.

Caution should be taken when introducing allergen foods. See the fact sheet on food allergies for more information.

### Tips

- Once your baby has teeth, brush teeth twice a day using a clean soft, cloth or small, soft toothbrush and a thin smear of low dose fluoride toothpaste. The fluoride in toothpaste will help prevent tooth decay.
- Make sure the food you feed your baby is fresh, stored correctly and prepared in a clean environment. Throw away any food you have already fed your baby and keep prepared food in your fridge for one day only. Babies are very sensitive to food poisoning.
- You will notice changes in your baby's nappies as you introduce new foods.
- Drinking water is a good habit to start early. Start to introduce cooled boiled water from a cup with a spout. Soft drinks, cordials and tea are not suitable drinks for babies. Fruit juice is also unnecessary.
- Continue to breastfeed on demand or if feeding formula aim for 100ml/kg baby's bodyweight/day (or around 5–6 bottles of 180–200ml each). Breastmilk or formula is still your baby's main food at this age.
- For convenience, prepare food ahead of time and freeze it in ice cube trays or small individual containers for later use.

This is a really exciting time. It's not just about nutrition but also about introducing your baby to our world of food, the enjoyment of it and the social aspects of it. The aim is that by 12 months your baby will be eating a wide range of healthy foods, just like the rest of the family.

The order of when foods should be introduced is related to when they are nutritionally needed by your baby and when your baby's body has developed enough to handle them.

Vary the texture of foods from smooth, to mashed, to lumpy, to finger food as your baby develops. Commercial baby foods will not offer this variety, so only use them occasionally.

Check your baby's growth regularly and make sure it is recorded on the growth chart in your baby's Personal Health Record. Continue to check that your baby's growth follows the pattern or curve of the graph. If the growth curve is flat or moving downward, speak with a health professional.

### Acknowledgements

This fact sheet is consistent with current Infant Feeding Guidelines and Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, as produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

It is also based on information drawn heavily from:

- Infant and Toddler Feeding Guide, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.
- Breastfeeding: A Simple Guide to Help You Establish Breastfeeding, Community Child Health Service, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.
- Growing Strong: Feeding You and Your Baby, Public Health Services, Queensland Health, 2003.
- Optimal Infant Nutrition: Evidence Based Guidelines 2003-2008, Queensland Health, 2003.

This fact sheet is also the result of input and effort from many health professionals in Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.

