

# picnic

## Feed your baby with confidence

Start solids when your  
baby is ready  
at around  
6 months  
of age.



Mid North Coast  
Local Health District

picnic   
[picnicproject.com.au](http://picnicproject.com.au)

# From birth to around 6 months

**Breastmilk or infant formula is all your baby needs in the first 6 months.**

Do not start solids before 4 months of age as this can lead to:

- Decreased breastmilk production
- Constipation
- Risk of choking
- Stress on your baby's kidneys.

If you feel your baby needs to start solids before around 6 months, talk to your Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

Starting solids too late (after 7 months of age) may slow a baby's growth, increase the risk of iron and zinc deficiency, delay oral development or cause baby to dislike solid foods.



# Starting smooth: Around 6 months

Your baby is ready to start solids when they can:

- hold their head steady and sit upright
- bring food to their mouth by themselves
- show an interest in food and eating.

## First foods

Babies need first foods that are high in iron to help brain development.

### Examples:

Pureed, finely mashed or grated

- Beef or lamb
- Chicken or pork
- Fish or eggs
- Tofu
- Iron-fortified cereal.



## Variety


Variety is important. Offer foods in any order. Include iron rich foods.

### Examples:

Pureed or finely mashed

- Avocado, sweet potato, pumpkin
- Apple, pear, banana
- Carrot, broccoli, cauliflower
- Lentils, pasta, rice.

**Continue breastmilk or infant formula while introducing solid foods.**



Introduce a cup with a small amount of boiled, then cooled tap water with meals.

# Time for textures: 6-8 months

Continue breastmilk  
or infant formula.

Choose a texture you and your baby are comfortable with. They may only eat a small amount to start.

**Some babies will prefer:**

- Purees
- Mashed or grated foods
- Soft finger foods

Follow your baby's hunger cues.



# Feeding cues

Be guided by your baby's hunger and fullness cues. Always let your child decide how much they want to eat.

## **Signs your baby is ready to eat:**

- Opening mouth
- Leaning toward the spoon
- Reaching to the food
- Trying to self-feed





# Feeding cues

## **Signs your baby is no longer wanting to eat:**

- Slowing down pace
- Shaking head 'no'
- Looking away
- Throwing food
- Getting unsettled or crying.







# 6-8 months

Start introducing new textures. This can be thicker purees, thicker mashed foods with lumps, or soft finger foods.

## Textures help to:

- Support your baby get better at eating
- Develop chewing which helps their speech
- Increase acceptance of all types of foods.

## Puree

Start with a small teaspoon. Increase from thin puree to thicker puree.

### Examples:

- Puree beef or chicken
- Puree avocado or banana
- Puree apple or pumpkin
- Plain yoghurt.





## Mashed & lumps

Start to mash foods with a fork or grate foods for a thicker texture.

### Examples:

- Minced meat or mashed lentils
- Mashed hard boiled eggs
- Mashed porridge or pasta
- Cooked mashed sweet potato.

## Soft finger foods

Choose foods that are soft enough to squish in your fingers. Cut to the size and shape of your finger so baby can hold them and self-feed.

### Examples:

- Soft steamed broccoli or carrot sticks
- Ripe banana or mango strips
- Cooked strips of chicken, beef or pork
- Lightly toasted bread crusts.



# Introduce allergen foods: 6-12 months

If possible, continue to breastfeed.

Introduce allergenic foods one at a time. This may reduce the chance of developing an allergy.

## **The common allergy causing foods are:**

Well-cooked egg, cow's milk, wheat, soy, peanut, tree nuts (almond, cashew), sesame, fish, and shellfish (prawns, crab)

- Once your baby tolerates the allergen, include it in meals around twice a week
- If your baby has an allergic reaction, stop giving that food and seek medical advice.



## Sensitive taste buds: Up to 12 months

Babies have sensitive taste buds. Some babies may not like the taste of some foods at first. They may need to try foods many times before they learn to like them. Keep offering new foods without any pressure to eat.

### Foods to avoid

Babies don't need added salt, sugar or fat to their food. Under 12 months of age, do avoid:

- Honey – the bacteria can be harmful to babies
- Whole nuts – can cause choking, choose smooth nut butters/spreads instead
- Tea, coffee, chocolate drinks – can reduce your baby's ability to absorb iron and other nutrients
- Fruit juice, soft drink, cordial – can lead to dental issues
- Plant based milks – have low nutrition for babies. After 12 months you can offer calcium enriched soy, rice, oat, coconut and almond milks.

# Mix it up: 8-12 months

Continue breastmilk  
or infant formula until  
at least 12 months.

Start to feed your baby more finger  
foods and softer mixed meals.

**Examples:**

- Slices/pieces of strawberries, kiwi  
fruit or steamed apple
- Vegetable omelette with soft  
vegetables
- Casseroles or pasta bakes.





- Beef or lentil pasta dish
- Soft strips of grilled fish and roasted vegetables
- Mixed meals of rice, spinach and lamb
- Strips of light toast with mashed avocado, or cottage cheese and cinnamon.

Include a wide variety of foods. Baby will enjoy more flavours: start to offer items like herbs, garlic and mild spices in meals. This can help them accept more variety as they grow older.



# Around 9 months

## Finger food size

Baby will be able to pick up smaller food pieces and show interest to self-feed. Offer smaller soft food pieces like cooked diced chicken, squashed blueberries or peas.

Babies' appetite and feeding skills will have developed. They may require solid foods before breastmilk or infant formula.





## Drinks

Cow's milk is low in iron and should not be provided as a drink until 12 months of age. It can be used in cooking in small amounts.

At meals, offer a small cup of boiled, then cooled tap water.



# Family foods: 12 months on

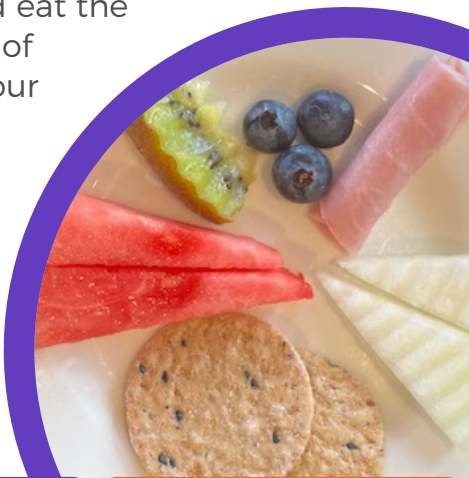
**Breastfeed for as long as you and your baby want.**

## Everyday family foods

Your toddler should be able to eat most family foods and drink from an open cup.

- Include a wide variety of foods from the five food groups
- Encourage self-feeding

Be a positive role model.  
Sit down and eat the same variety of foods with your child. Do not react or comment if they dislike a food.





## Meal schedule

A regular meal schedule and sticking to the feeding roles can reduce most 'fussy' eating behaviours reported by parents.

### **Offer food every 2-3 hours:**

- Aim for 3 main meals and 2 smaller mini-meals
- Offer more than one food at a mini-meal (snack) and limit packaged items if you can
- Offer water only between these times.

# Family foods: 12 months on

## Mini-meal (snack) examples:

- Yoghurt and fruit
- Milk and fruit toast
- Hummus and crackers
- Pikelets and  
smashed  
banana.





## Drinks

Offer regular tap water at meals and across the day.

### **From 12 months on:**

- You can offer a cup of full cream cow's milk (or calcium rich plant milk alternatives)
- Stop using breastmilk or infant formula bottles

## Plant-based diets

If you choose a plant based diet for your child, keep breastfeeding as long as possible. Consult a Dietitian for more specific nutrition advice.

# Feeding roles

Provide a relaxed eating environment. Never pressure your child to eat. Trust their appetite, hunger and fullness cues.

## Parent:

Your role is to choose the food and offer it on a family schedule.

## Child:

Your child's role is to decide whether to eat, and how much to eat.





# Gagging and choking

Always stay with your baby when they are eating and drinking. Never leave them unsupervised.

- Gagging is a reflex that helps protect the airway. Stay calm and encourage your baby to cough the food out. They will be ok.
- Choking is silent and is a blockage of the airway. Your child will need help to clear it out. Look for a child first aid course to complete.



# Commercial baby foods

Food pouches can be useful at times but avoid frequent use. They don't vary much in texture and it can be harder for baby to learn about family foods.

Too much pouch food sucking can cause tooth decay and affect speech development.

Home prepared food can be as convenient. Puree or mash cooked food and freeze in ice cube trays for easy single serves.



# Positive mealtimes

Some food refusal is a normal part of child development and learning to eat. Be patient and continue to offer a wide variety of foods. Never pressure or force your child to eat. Never punish your child for not eating. Trust their appetite.

## **Some tips to help with enjoyable mealtimes:**

- Eat meals as a family
- Avoid distractions: switch off screens and put toys aside
- Talk about food facts like how it grew or which country it came from. Avoid comments like 'Try it, you'll like it'. Don't label foods as good or bad
  - Involve children in cooking and food play. This can help them smell and touch new foods
- Food is not a good reward. It can change a child's relationship with food. Try other rewards like extra play time or a visit to the park instead.



# Further info

## **Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)**

Breastfeeding Helpline:  
1800 686 268

[click here](#)

## **Child and Family Health Services**

[click here](#)

## **PICNIC**

Parents in Child Nutrition  
Informing Community

[click here](#)

## **Raising Children Network**

[click here](#)

## **Nip Allergies in the Bub**

[click here](#)

Developed in consultation with PICNIC parents and Child & Family Health Nurse teams of the Mid North Coast Local Health District (LHD). Information based on the Starting Solids Family Foods brochure originally developed by Central Coast LHD and What stage is your baby at brochure from Northern NSW LHD.



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