



# Health

## <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health> Feeding Guide for the First Year

### Reviewed By:

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**M**aking appropriate food choices for your baby during the first year of life is very important. More growth occurs during the first year than at any other time. It's important to feed your baby a variety of healthy foods at the proper time. Starting good eating habits at this early stage will help set healthy eating patterns for life.

## Recommended Feeding Guide for the First Year

Breast milk and formula are designed to be the primary sources of nutrition throughout an infant's first year of life. You should talk with your baby's health care provider before starting solid foods. Solid foods should not begin before age 4 months because:

Breast milk or formula provide your baby with all the nutrients that are needed.

Your baby isn't physically developed enough to eat solid food from a spoon.

Feeding your baby solid food too early may result in poor feeding experiences and increased weight gain in both infancy and early childhood.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all infants, children and adolescents take in enough vitamin D through supplements, formula or cow's milk to prevent complications from deficiency of this vitamin. In November 2008, the AAP updated its recommendations for daily intake of vitamin D for infants, children, and adolescents who are healthy. It is now recommended that the minimum intake of vitamin D for these groups should be 400 IU per day, beginning soon after birth. Your baby's health care provider can recommend the proper type and amount of vitamin D supplement.

## Guide for Breast-feeding (Zero to 12 Months)

In the early days after a baby's birth, the mother should plan to breast-feed every two to three hours, including overnight. The mother should respond to the infant's cues of hunger in a prompt and relaxed manner, providing a quiet and comfortable environment for both herself and the baby. Frustrated or distracted infants may have difficulties latching on.

It is normal for infants to wake up overnight to feed for the first several months. If you have any concerns about overnight feeding, please discuss them with your health care provider.

Alternate breasts to feed on, and allow the infant to completely empty the breast before switching to the other. This practice ensures the infant receives hindmilk, which is richer in nutrients.

Follow your child's feeding cues and resist forcing a schedule. Instead, rely on keeping track of wet diapers and your child's growth to judge whether he or she is receiving enough breast milk. A mother's milk changes as the infant grows, and feeding habits change as well in order to best meet a child's needs. If you have any questions about whether your child is receiving enough breast milk, ask your health care provider.

When not able to breast-feed, use a breast pump to extract milk and maintain milk supply. Pumped breast milk should be stored safely, using appropriate temperature guidelines. Pumped breast milk may be offered to infants in bottles, while responding to the same feeding cues to determine how much they take. Forcing bottles to be emptied may result in overfeeding and excess weight gain, even when feeding breast milk.

With the proper support, a mother can meet the needs of most infants, even twins, so seek out help from your health care provider or lactation consultant for success.

## Guide for Formula Feeding (Zero to 12 Months)

When breast milk is not available, standard infant formula is an appropriate alternative for most healthy full term infants, but there are some differences between brands. Do not hesitate to ask your health care provider for a recommendation if you are unsure which formula to use.

Bottle-feeding should be interactive, with the caregiver holding both the bottle and the infant. Propping a bottle has been linked to an increased risk of ear infections and tooth decay.

Formula feeding should be in response to the infant's needs and not based on a predetermined schedule. Look for cues of hunger and fullness to determine both when to feed and how much. The number of wet diapers per day and your child's growth will reflect if he or she is getting enough formula. The chart below demonstrates common intakes for infants at various stages. However, ask your health care provider if you have any questions about how much formula your infant is taking.

The amount of formula an infant takes will decrease as the baby increases intake of solid foods, but formula remains a significant source of calories, protein, calcium and vitamin D for the first year of life.

Ask your health care provider before switching an infant less than 1 year of age from formula to cow's milk or a cow's milk alternative.

Age	Amount of formula per feeding	Number of feedings per 24 hours
1 month	2 to 4 ounces	six to eight
2 months	5 to 6 ounces	five to six
3 to 5 months	6 to 7 ounces	five to six

## Complementary Feedings (After 6 Months of Age)

## Beverages

Offer only breast milk or formula in bottles until 1 year of age unless specifically advised by your health care provider.

Begin offering breast milk and/or formula in a cup starting at 6 months of age. Infants should drink breast milk and/or formula for the first year of life.

Fruit juice is not recommended under 1 year of age.

When introducing juice, offer 100% pasteurized juice and limit it to 4–6 ounces per day. Do NOT place juice in a bottle.

Avoid giving any sugar-sweetened beverages to infants.

## Solid Foods

Introduce solid foods when your infant is ready, at around 6 months of age depending on the infant's development.

Infants are ready to start eating solid foods when they can:

sit up on their own or with a little support

reach for and put things in their mouth

open their mouth when seeing something coming

keep food in their mouth rather than pushing it out onto the chin

move food to the back of their mouth with their tongue

turn their head away when they do not want something

Prepare to introduce solid foods in a calm feeding environment where the infant is sitting upright and is appropriately supported and moderately hungry.

Start with small amounts of solid food, feeding with a spoon or allowing finger feeding, then gradually increase the amount as the infant eats more and develops. Avoid offering breast milk or formula until after the solid-food experience has wound down.

Expose infants to a wide variety of flavors and textures of healthy food. Don't limit your baby's food choices to the ones you like. Offering a range of foods early will pave the way for healthy eating habits.

Maintain the division of responsibility when feeding.

The caregiver is responsible for what to eat (offering appropriate variety and textures).

The child is responsible for deciding whether to eat and how much.

Avoid adding salt or sugar to make baby foods more appealing. Many babies and toddlers need to experience a new food multiple times before accepting it, and increased intakes of salt and sugar among children are associated with obesity in adults.

Observe infants for any signs of intolerance when introducing a new food or texture, and discuss all concerns with your health care provider.

Although convenient and safe, commercial baby foods are not required. Young children are more likely to eat foods they see others eating, so as long as they are observed to see how they handle new food in their mouths, baby-led weaning using table foods is an appropriate way to introduce solids.

Avoid honey in any form during your child's first year, as it can cause infant botulism. Address any concerns about developing food allergies with your health care provider.

Don't restrict fat and cholesterol in the diets of very young children, unless advised by your child's health care provider. Children need calories, fat and cholesterol for the development of their brains and nervous systems, and for general growth.

*Updated on July 26, 2019.*

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