

# Nutrition for

## Kids' LIFE

# Feeding Your Baby Zero to Six Months

Feeding your baby in a healthy way helps your baby to grow and develop. You can make choices to start your baby on a lifetime of good nutrition.

## IN THE BEGINNING



Breastfeeding only is the best choice until your baby is six months old. Breastfeeding (or formula) gives your baby all the nutrition she needs for the first six months. Hold and look at your baby while feeding her. These close feelings of cuddling, snuggling and talking help your baby feel loved and comforted.

### If You Are Breastfeeding

Breastfeed whenever your baby seems hungry. This may be as often as 10-12 times each day in the 1st month. Your baby is getting enough if he has six or more wet diapers each day, is gaining weight, and is alert when awake.

### If You Are Formula Feeding

- Start with 1-2 oz. of formula per feeding. Your baby may drink each day about 2 oz. of formula for each pound he weighs. An 8 lb. baby may drink 16 oz. of formula in 24 hours. The amount he drinks will increase as he grows, but may be more or less at a feeding as your baby goes through his growth spurts.
- Mix formula according to directions on the package. Bottles are for breast milk and formula only. Never prop a bottle or put your baby to bed with a bottle. This may lead to tooth decay.

## FEEDING SOLID FOODS

- Near six months, breast milk cannot give your baby all the nutrients she needs. Solid foods, or “complementary foods”, provide iron, zinc and other nutrients your baby needs. Eating solids also teaches your baby about new flavors, textures and eating skills she needs as she gets older.
- About the middle of her first year, watch for signs that your baby is physically ready to have solid foods. These signs might appear as early as 4 months or as late as 7 months.
 

▶ No longer pushes food out of mouth with tongue	▶ Can move food from the front of the tongue to the back to swallow	▶ Can sit with support and hold head steady	▶ Recognizes a spoon and opens mouth for the spoon
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- A common first solid food is **iron-fortified rice cereal**. Mix 1 teaspoon of rice cereal with 4 tablespoons of breast milk or formula. Increase the amount and thickness of the cereal over time. Next food choices are **pureed baby meat**, a good source of iron and zinc, and **strained fruits and vegetables** with vitamin C. Read the label. Vitamin C helps your baby use iron in cereal better. The order in which you introduce meats, fruits and vegetables, is not important. Just give each single-ingredient food for 2-4 days before adding the next food. If you think your baby is reacting to a new food, such as having a rash or upset stomach, call your doctor.

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### Developed by Family and Consumer Sciences

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## HUNGRY OR FULL?

### FEEDING TIPS

Put your baby in a high chair and sit facing him.

Use a small, long-handled baby spoon.

Put cereal to her lips, not in her mouth, so she can use her sucking skills.

Introduce one food at a time.

Stop feeding as soon as he shows you he's full.

The amount your baby drinks or eats can vary from feeding to feeding, and day to day. Watch for signs your baby is giving you that he is hungry or full. Don't push your baby to finish bottles or food.

#### Signs your baby is hungry

- Fussing and then crying
- Squirming and stretching, clenching fists
- Sucks fist
- "Roots" or turns head for breast or bottle
- Leans forward for food
- Opens mouth for spoon or even reaches for spoon

#### Signs your baby is full

- Stops sucking, lets go of breast or bottle nipple
- Turns head away
- Becomes sleepy or falls asleep
- Pushes away bottle or spoon
- Closes mouth
- Loses interest in eating, starts to play



### SAFETY TIPS

- *Always wash your hands before feeding your baby.*
- *Clean all bottles and dishes with hot, soapy water and rinse well.*
- *Check the temperature of any heated bottles to make sure they're evenly warmed, not hot.*
- *Never microwave a bottle or baby food.*
- *Throw away any breast milk or formula left in a bottle at the end of a feeding.*
- *Don't feed your baby directly from a baby food jar. Put the baby food in a dish, and throw away any that is leftover.*

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Consult your doctor if you see a problem.

#### **La Leche League**

A resource on breastfeeding  
[www.lalecheleague.org](http://www.lalecheleague.org)

#### **American Academy of Pediatrics**

William H Dietz, M.D., Ph.D., Loraine Stern, M.D.  
Guide to Your Child's Nutrition, New York: Random House; 1999. Available at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).

**Physicians Practice Communications Network**  
[www.medem.com](http://www.medem.com)

Go to: Learning Centers and then Infant Nutrition  
Also Library Entry: Children's Health

#### **USDA, Food and Nutrition Information Center**

[www.nal.usda.gov/fnic](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic)

Go to: Topics A-Z: Breastfeeding and Infant Nutrition

Also go to: Resource List: Child Nutrition and Health

