

## **FEEDING YOUR CHILD 9 – 12 MONTHS**

Your 9 month-old child has probably made great progress from taking only breastmilk/formula to eating baby cereal, strained or mashed fruits and vegetables, and perhaps some finger foods such as crackers and dry toast.

Most 9-month-old babies have begun to show the beginning of chewing movements: a side-to-side motion of the tongue and mashing of food with the jaws. It is important to support these developmental changes by increasing the thickness and texture of foods offered to your child.

If you have been giving your child only strained baby foods, it is time to offer foods with more texture. If you wait too long to introduce coarser, more textured foods, your child may prefer smooth (strained) foods and may strongly resist any food with lumps of any kind.

At this age, babies are practicing picking up objects with their thumb and forefinger (pincer grasp). Offering finger foods gives your baby the opportunity to further practice this developmental achievement.

The process of changing from smooth (baby) food to table foods need not be difficult or complicated. Your baby may grab the spoon from you or clam up when you try to feed him. Do not be upset by this. Let him try to feed himself as much as possible, even if the process is messy. You may want to put a washable mat underneath the highchair to protect the floor. Try to stay calm and be patient so that mealtimes remain pleasant and feeding power struggles are avoided.

At first, your baby may gag on thicker, more textured foods. Go slowly and watch how the baby handles new foods. Avoid offering any foods that could cause choking. Potential choking hazards include apples, grapes, cherries, watermelon with seeds, raw vegetables, fish with bones, hot dogs, tough meat, nuts, seeds, popcorn, and hard candies.

Initially, offer mashed, soft table foods. Some babies do not need their food mashed for long. Many prefer, and are able to handle, small pieces of diced soft, cooked vegetables and fruits. Homemade mashed potatoes, white or sweet potato cubes, well-cooked pasta or rice, toast strips and unsalted saltines crackers can be used in place of baby cereal for lunch and dinner. Be sure to continue using a serving of at least 4 tablespoons of dry, iron-fortified infant cereal at breakfast to insure the intake of an excellent source of iron. Teeth are not necessary to eat the soft foods listed above. These foods are mashed by the baby's gums.

Meat (if not already introduced) and other high protein foods should be offered to your 8 –9 month old. Because your child's solid food intake has increased, his breastmilk/formula intake decreases

considerably. Meat and other high protein foods are needed to meet the dietary feeding requirements for proper growth.. Cottage cheese, tofu, mild cheeses cut into cubes or strips, and soft, mashed, cooked legumes (dried peas, beans, and lentils) are all good choices. Tiny, moist meatballs can be made from lean ground meats (beef, chicken or turkey). Chopped up pieces or strips of moist, tender beef or chicken may be tried also.

Foods most commonly associated with allergic reactions are: cow milk, egg, soy, peanut, tree nuts, wheat, fish and shellfish. Currently there is no convincing evidence that delaying introduction of these foods reduces the risk of food allergy.

Try to model the baby's intake of food into regular meals and snacks. A sample meal plan might include:

**MEAL**

**FOOD**

Breakfast

4-6 Tbsp. Dry, iron-fortified cereal mixed with formula or 2% milk

Fruit

Formula/Breastfeeding

Mid-morning  
(optional)

1-2 oz water

Finger food

Lunch

Cheese or other protein food

Toast cut up in strips/cubes

Banana slices

Formula/Breastfeeding

Mid-afternoon  
(optional)

1-2 oz water

Finger food when able (see text)

Dinner

Meat, cheese, or other protein food

Starchy vegetable like potato or a

grain like rice, pasta or toast

Green or yellow/orange vegetable

Formula/Breastfeeding

Bedtime

Formula/Breastfeeding

## Feeding Your Child (9-12 Months)

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Fruit juice is not recommended under 1 year of age.

You may wonder how long to breastfeed or when to change from formula to cow's milk. Typically, it is recommended that infants continue to receive formula and/or breastmilk until 12 months of age. To encourage solid food intake you are probably nursing or giving a bottle after a meal and providing a cup with meals. You may have eliminated a few nursing sessions or some bottle feedings because your baby is eating well and is not hungry for them.

A formula-fed 12-month-old who is well established on solid foods may be ready to change to whole cow's milk. If your child is overweight, or there is a family history of obesity, high blood pressure, or heart disease, your pediatrician/nurse practitioner may recommend 2% milk. Do not use 1% or nonfat milk. When using cow's milk, the rest of the diet needs to be adequate in nutrients in which the cow's milk is lacking (i.e. vitamin C and iron). To safely change to cow's milk, your child should be eating a minimum of 4 tablespoons of iron-fortified dry infant cereal or 2oz of a strained meat and at least 1 small jar of each of infant fruits and vegetables daily. If your child is eating some table foods, he should eat at least 3 oz. of solids at each of three meals including at least 4 Tablespoons of iron-fortified dry infant cereal or 2 ounces of meat. In addition, he should eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, and other high protein foods. The blood screening performed at the 9 month check-up will help determine whether your child's diet is adequate. Ask your pediatrician or nurse practitioner if your baby is ready for milk, usually at 12 months. Use 2% milk until age two, then fat free milk.

A baby who is still breastfeeding at 12 months of age can certainly continue to do so. Cow's milk may also be given along with breastmilk as long as she is on an appropriate diet as outlined above. It is a personal decision as to when you will stop breast feeding and fully switch your baby to cow's milk.

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## **FINGER FOODS 9 –12 MONTHS**

- Mashed or diced soft, cooked vegetables
- Mashed, soft, peeled fruits
- Chunky applesauce
- Mashed or sliced banana
- Toast cut in strips or tiny cubes (may be lightly buttered)
- Graham or unsalted, saltine crackers
- Well-cooked noodles, macaroni, spaghetti, or rice
- Cheerios or other dry, unsweetened breakfast cereals
- Lumpy mashed or diced potatoes
- Cottage Cheese, especially large-curd
- Mild cheeses cut in strips or small cubes
- Moist, ground meat or tiny, moist meatballs
- Eggs
- Tofu cubes

## **DEVELOPMENTAL PATTERN AND FEEDING RECOMMENDATION 9 – 12 MONTHS**

### **FEEDING STYLE**

- May prefer finger feeding to being spoon-fed
- Increased use of cup at meals

### **FOOD SELECTION**

- Increase texture, coarseness and thickness of solids
- Mashed or chopped, soft table foods
- Commercial *Junior* or *Stage 3* foods
- Finger Foods

### **READINESS SIGNS**

- Beginning of chewing movements: side-to-side
- Motion of the tongue and mashing of food with jaws
- Able to pick up objects with thumb and forefinger (pincer grasp)
- Grabs the spoon and tries self-feeding