

FEEDING YOUR CHILD 6 – 9 MONTHS

Your baby probably started eating solid foods some time between the ages of 4 and 6 months. Appropriate foods for a 4 to 6 month-old child include dry, iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with formula or breastmilk, strained meats and strained (pureed) fruits and vegetables.

If your baby started eating solid foods closer to 4 months, you are probably eager to provide more variety at this time. If your baby started solids closer to 6 months, you may still be working up to the recommended daily amount of iron-fortified infant cereal (4 tablespoons/day) or meat (1-2 oz of strained meat/day or 1-2 small jars of commercially prepared meat/day such as Gerber “2nd foods” meats) plus 2-4 tablespoons each of pureed fruits and vegetables.

In either case, remember that the *milk feeding* (breastmilk or formula) should still be providing most of the baby’s calories. Breastmilk/formula continues to provide the best balance of nutrients for your growing baby.

Fruit juice is not recommended under 1 year or age.

A 6 month-old breastfed baby usually nurses 3 – 5 times per day. A bottle-fed baby is probably eating at least 24 – 32 oz. of formula per day. The task for the second half of the baby’s first year is to offer foods that help her make the transition from very smooth-textured foods to table foods.

As soon as your baby can sit without support, put her in a highchair for all meals and snacks. In order to make the texture thicker, gradually decrease the amount of liquid added to the dry infant cereal. The baby may tend to gag a little at first, but will soon easily be able to swallow the stiffer food. Offering sips of breastmilk or formula in a cup between spoonfuls of cereal may help.

A spouted cup is useful but not essential. At first you will need to hold the cup for your baby and perhaps support her chin to help position the cup for drinking. She will soon be eager to try to do it alone and you will only need to supervise.

A baby usually begins to show chewing movements by 8 – 10 months of age. The pincer grasp (picking up items with thumb and forefinger) develops at about the same time. An infant who is starting to chew and is using a pincer grasp is showing readiness for thicker, chunkier foods and for finger foods. Commercial *Junior* and *Stage 3* foods and table foods mashed and thinned to an appropriate texture are good choices. A listing of suggested beginner and more advanced finger foods is attached. To avoid choking, the first finger foods should include those that dissolve easily in the mouth.

YOUR BABY SHOULD BE IN A HIGHCHAIR WITH AN ADULT CLOSELY SUPERVISING SHOULD ANY GAGGING OR CHOKING OCCUR.

Continue to provide at least 4 tablespoons of dry, iron-fortified infant cereal per day and/or 1-2 ounces or small jars of strained meats per day. By 8 – 9 months, serve 4 or more tablespoons of fruit and 4 or more Tablespoons of vegetables daily. The nutrients in breastmilk and formula continue to be an important part of your baby’s overall diet.

Always plan to serve regular meals at about the same time each day. Regular snacks may also be necessary. A sample meal plan is attached. To encourage the intake of solids at meals, try to nurse the baby or give the bottle of formula after the meal rather than before. By doing this, your baby will have a good appetite for solids and will gradually decrease her intake of breastmilk/formula. Formula can be served as a beverage in a cup with meals. Eventually, your baby will drink enough formula from a cup that a nursing session or a bottle after the meal can be discontinued.

A good time to start adding other high protein foods to your baby’s diet is when she begins to eat table foods (between 7 and 10 months). It is at this time that a baby is usually eating three meals per day of enough quantity that breastmilk/formula intake drops and an extra source of iron and protein is needed. Sources of protein include meat, poultry, cooked dried beans or peas (legumes), cottage cheese, tofu, and mild, soft cheeses such as American or mozzarella.

Babies without molars cannot chew meats easily. Therefore, start with pureed (homemade or commercial) or ground meats. Serve 2 Tablespoons of a high protein food daily. Use a baby food grinder to grind the meats. To make grinding easier, moisten the meat with water, salt-free broth, or the water used to cook vegetables.

Cut up the moist, tender table meats very finely and serve them as finger food. Make tiny, moist meatballs from a variety of lean ground meats (beef, chicken or turkey). These may be mashed or diced.

Commercial “2nd foods” meats (Gerber) may be used for variety and a good source of protein. Vegetable-meat dinners like *vegetable-chicken* contain a lot of vegetables and only a little meat. These dinners are considered a vegetable, not a protein. Such dinners may be used occasionally, but should be used in place of a vegetable and along with a source of protein.

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

MEAL

FOOD

Breakfast

2 Tablespoons of dry, iron-fortified cereal mixed with formula or breastmilk
Fruit
Formula/Breastfeeding

Mid-morning
(optional)

Finger food when able (see text)
Formula/Breastfeeding

Lunch

Finger food when able (see text)
Formula/Breastfeeding

Mid-afternoon (optional)	Finger food when able (see text) Formula/Breastfeeding
Dinner	2 Tablespoons of dry, iron-fortified cereal mixed with formula or breastmilk or 2 ounces of meat Vegetable Formula/Breastfeeding
Bedtime	Formula/Breastfeeding

FINGER FOODS 6 – 9 MONTHS

BEGINNERS

- Mashed, soft, cooked vegetables
- Mashed, soft, peeled fruits, such as ripe banana, peaches, pears, apricots
- Chunky applesauce
- Toasted oat ring cereal (e.g. Cheerios) and other dry, unsweetened cereals that dissolve easily in the mouth
- Toast strips
- Unsalted, saltine-type crackers
- Graham crackers
- Lumpy mashed potatoes
- Cottage Cheese, especially large-curd
- Mild, soft cheese (e.g. American or mozzarella) cut in strips or small cubes

ADVANCED

- Diced, soft, cooked vegetables
- Diced, soft, peeled fruits
- Well-cooked noodles, macaroni, spaghetti, or rice
- Diced, soft, cooked pieces of white/sweet potato or yams
- Moist, ground meat or tiny, moist meatballs
- Tofu cubes

FOODS TO AVOID

Avoid HONEY until after one year of age because it may contain harmful bacteria spores that can cause a life-threatening illness (botulism).

Avoid the following foods because they may cause your baby to choke:

- Fresh apples (whole, chunks, slices)
- Whole grapes and cherries
- Hot dogs, sausages, tough meat, fish with bones
- Peanut Butter (please see the handout - Introducing Peanut into Your Infants Diet for the correct way to introduce and give peanut butter)
- Popcorn
- Nuts and seeds (e.g. sunflower seeds)
- Watermelon with seeds
- Hard candy
- Raw (uncooked) vegetables (e.g. carrots, celery)

Avoid the following foods because they may take the place of more nutrient-rich foods:

- Pastry, cake and other sweet desserts
- Sugar-sweetened cereals
- Candy
- Cookies
- Soft drinks, sweetened artificially flavored fruit drinks like Tang, Kool-Aid, HiC, Hawaiian Punch, etc.

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.