



your
baby

Feeding your baby
in the first year

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This booklet gives practical advice about feeding your baby. It takes you from the early months when your baby is fed only with breast milk or infant formula, to a year old. It gives advice about when to start your baby on solid foods, what foods are suitable and what you need to avoid.

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The first six months

breast milk or infant formula



From birth to six months of age, breast milk or infant formula gives babies all the nourishment they need.

The benefits of breastfeeding

Breast milk:

- helps your baby's growth
- makes infections less likely, and helps babies get better more quickly if they do get ill
- makes babies less likely to get tummy upsets or constipation

And if you breastfeed, there are no feeds to prepare, or bottles to wash and sterilise.

There is more and more evidence that breastfeeding is better for babies' health and development in both the short and long term. There is also some evidence that breastfeeding is better for the mother's health too.

Starting breastfeeding

If you want to breastfeed, it's best not to give any bottles to your baby at all in the early weeks. This is because using bottles can make it harder for you and your baby to get used to breastfeeding, and using formula will reduce the amount of breast milk you make.

If you're not sure about breastfeeding, it's best to give it a try right at the start because it will be harder once your baby is used to feeding from a bottle. This also means your baby will get the benefit of your colostrum (the milk you produce in the first few days after the birth). Colostrum boosts a baby's immune system and helps protect them from getting ill. Also remember it takes time for both you and your baby to get used to breastfeeding.

See **More information** (which starts on page 25) for further advice, including advice on what to eat when you're breastfeeding.

How long to breastfeed

Your baby needs nothing but breast milk (or formula milk if you're not breastfeeding) until they are six months (or 26 weeks) old.

At around six months, you will need to start giving solid foods as well as breast milk, but your breast milk will still be important for your baby. So continue breastfeeding as well as giving solids for as long as you and your baby want to.

If you have to cut down on breastfeeding, perhaps, for example, because you are going back to work (see **Going back to work** on page 24), remember that just a few feeds a day will still give your baby valuable nutrients and help protect their health. This can be especially useful if your baby has just started at nursery and so is mixing with other children who may have coughs and colds.

Using infant formula

If you are mixing breastfeeding and bottle-feeding, or you're not breastfeeding, infant formula is the only alternative to breast milk for the first 12 months.

Most infant formula is made from cows' milk, and is treated to make it more like breast milk. Follow-on formula isn't suitable for babies under six months.

When you start to prepare a feed, it's very important to clean the work surfaces and wash your hands first. You'll also need to sterilise bottles and teats before you use them. Make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

If you're making up powdered infant formula, remember to always follow the manufacturer's instructions. You should also do the following:

1. use fresh tap water or a bottled water that says it is suitable for infants (see **Drinks**, which starts on page 21)
2. boil the water in the kettle
3. then leave the water to cool, but for no more than half an hour
4. always put the boiled water in the bottle first, before the powder

Test the temperature of the formula milk on the inside of your wrist – it should be body temperature, which means it should feel warm.

If it feels too hot, put the cap over the teat and hold the bottle under cold running water.

If there is any made-up formula milk left after a feed, throw it away.

Ideally, you should make up formula milk freshly for each feed just before feeding. This is because using formula milk that has been stored may increase the chance of your baby becoming ill.

When you are going out, you can put boiling water in a flask and make up fresh formula milk when you need it.

If you need to take a made-up feed with you, make it up in the morning, cool as above, then put it in the fridge for at least one hour before putting in a cool bag with a frozen ice brick. Feeds stored in a cool bag should be used within four hours.

You should do the same if you need to take a made-up feed to a nursery or childminder – when you get there, take the feed out of the cool bag and put it straight in the fridge. Try to make sure the made-up feed is used on the same day you take it in, because it isn't ideal to store feeds, especially for young babies.

You should never store feeds for more than 24 hours.

Remember, it's always safer to make up a fresh feed whenever possible. You could also use a ready-to-feed liquid formula.

Milks based on goats' milk protein have not been approved for use by the European Food Safety Authority for babies under a year old, so don't choose these for your baby.

Only use soya-based infant formulas if you have been advised to by your GP.

See page 21 for more on infant formulas. For advice on **Food allergies**, see page 20.

When to start giving solid foods

You should start giving your baby solid foods when he or she is around six months old.

In recent years the advice about when to start babies on solid foods has changed. This is because we now know more about when babies are ready for starting solid foods and the effects of giving solid foods too early.

We now know that it's usually best to wait until six months, but all babies are different so you might want to ask your health visitor or GP for advice about when is best for your baby.

If you want to introduce solid foods before six months, make sure you check with your health visitor or GP first. And don't give any solid foods to your baby before he or she is four months old (17 weeks). See 'Why wait until six months?' below.

Why wait until six months?

Giving solid foods to a baby before he or she can cope with them, can increase the risk of infection and allergies.

By six months, babies are physically ready to start eating solid foods. At this age, babies can sit up with support, control their heads and move food around their mouths. Their digestive and immune systems are also stronger and they are often interested in food and want to chew. At this age babies need more than milk alone.

If your baby still seems to be hungry on their usual milk feeds before six months, try offering more milk at each bottle feed if they are finishing the bottle and seem to be looking for more. If you are breastfeeding, try feeding more often.

If you're concerned about your baby's health, or you want to start your baby on solid foods before six months, talk to your health visitor or GP first. Many foods are not suitable for babies under six months, including foods that contain wheat, gluten, eggs, fish, shellfish, liver, soft and unpasteurised cheeses. This is because a baby's immune system is too young to handle foods that can cause allergies or foods that may contain harmful bacteria. Also see **Foods to avoid up to a year old** and **Food allergies** on pages 18 to 20.

Babies under four months (17 weeks) should not be given solid foods.

Some people think that starting solid foods before six months will help a baby sleep, but there is no evidence to support this.

If your baby was premature, talk to your health visitor or GP about the right age to start your baby on solid foods.

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Learning to eat solid foods is a gradual process – at first your aim is simply to get your baby used to the feel of food in their mouth.

At six months

starting solid foods



When your baby is around six months old you need to start giving them solid foods as well as milk feeds.

Learning to eat solid foods is a gradual process – at first your aim is simply to get your baby used to the feel of food in their mouth. Remember there is no need to rush. Your baby will still be getting most of their nourishment from breast or formula milk, and you will be breastfeeding and/or formula-feeding much the same as before.

How to start

When you start giving solid foods, it's best to choose a time when your baby is calm and alert, and you are relaxed. It doesn't matter whether you offer food to your baby after or halfway through one of your usual milk feeds. To begin with, it's best not to give solids when your baby is very hungry and expecting a breast (or bottle) – they could just get frustrated.

Babies take time to learn to eat solid food. The food may come back out of their mouths at first. This doesn't mean they don't like it. They just need more practice. But don't press food on your baby if they don't seem to like the taste, or just don't want to eat. Stop, and try again the next day.

Start by offering a small amount (say a couple of teaspoons), once a day. As your baby gets used to taking food from a spoon and moving it to the back of the mouth to swallow it, gradually build up to offering food twice, then three times a day. Try to give your baby more if they seem to want more (for advice on first foods, see page 9).

All babies are different and some babies are much more enthusiastic about starting solid foods than others. If your baby only eats very small amounts, you don't need to worry if they are still being breastfed frequently on demand, or they are having plenty of formula milk, and are healthy and growing well.

How much you give, how often, the consistency, texture, and range of different foods you offer needs to change as your baby grows and gradually learns how to chew, how to hold a spoon and, in time, how to feed themselves.

Do I still need to give milk to my baby?

Your baby still needs plenty of breast milk or formula milk until they are a year old. How much they need depends on how well they take to solid foods, and this may vary from day to day. Let your baby decide how much milk they need each day.

When babies are ill, they often lose their appetite for solid foods. For babies who are breastfed, they tend to want to breastfeed more often when they are ill, and breast milk will help them get better more quickly. Being breastfed is also comforting for the baby.

Don't force your baby to eat solid foods when they are poorly, wait until they show an interest again, and offer milk as often as your baby wants.

See **Drinks** on page 21 for more on milk.

How much you give, how often, the consistency, texture, and range of different foods you offer needs to change as your baby grows.

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Tips on getting started

- Start giving solid foods when you and your baby are calm and your baby is alert
- Remember your baby will need to learn how to eat solid foods
- Start by offering just a couple of teaspoons once a day
- If your baby doesn't seem to want to eat, stop and try again the next day
- Build up to offering food twice, then three times a day
- Give more if they want more
- Remember all babies are different: don't worry if they don't want much to start with (if they're well and still breast or bottle-feeding)

First foods to give

Give your baby whatever you feel comfortable with offering as 'first foods', or what your baby seems most interested in, but check **Foods to avoid up to a year old** and **Food allergies** on pages 18 to 20.

By six months, most babies can quickly learn to chew soft lumpy food even if they have no teeth – just make sure the food is fairly soft.

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Give your baby whatever you feel comfortable with offering as 'first foods', or what your baby seems most interested in.

Some first foods you might want to try:

- Mashed or puréed cooked vegetables such as potato, sweet potato or yam, mixed together with parsnip, carrot, broccoli or cauliflower
- Mashed ripe fruit such as banana, avocado, cooked apple, pear or mango
- Baby rice or well cooked and mashed white rice, oats or other starchy foods such as maize, millet, cornmeal or noodles
- Blended or puréed meat, fish or chicken – well cooked and prepared without salt. Remember to make sure you remove any bones
- Soft cooked and puréed or well mashed lentils (dhal), split peas, chickpeas or other pulses
- Full-fat milk products such as yoghurt, fromage frais or custard (choose lower sugar varieties)

Starting solid foods between four and six months

If you have spoken to your health visitor or GP and chosen to start your baby on solid foods before six months, you should also check with your health visitor or GP about what foods are best to give your baby as first foods, for example they might suggest purées of fruit, vegetables and baby rice.

There are also many foods that should be avoided at this age, including foods that contain wheat, gluten, eggs, fish, shellfish, liver, soft and unpasteurised cheeses.



From six to nine months

exploring new tastes and textures



Once your baby has learned how to take soft food from a spoon, you can start to introduce mashed food with soft lumps. At this age babies will also begin to pick up finger foods, so offer these too.

What foods to give

Offer your baby foods rich in vitamins and minerals such as meat, fish, eggs, fruit and vegetables. (Make sure that eggs are thoroughly cooked until both the white and yolk are solid.) Use some starchy foods as well, such as potatoes, rice, pasta and couscous, or you might want to offer plantain and green banana.

Keep introducing new foods, so your baby gets used to different tastes and to widen the range of different foods your baby eats.

Make savoury meals with a mixture of:

- Blended, minced or mashed meat, fish or chicken (remember to make sure you remove any bones) or egg – well cooked and prepared without salt. Or you could give soft cooked and/or mashed lentils (dhal), split peas, chickpeas or other pulses (without any salt)
- Mashed cooked or soft pieces of vegetables such as broccoli, parsnip or carrot
- Baby rice or well cooked and mashed white rice, pasta, oats or other starchy foods such as potato, maize, millet, cornmeal or noodles

Also offer:

- Mashed or soft pieces of ripe fruit such as banana, avocado, melon, peach, pear or mango
- Full-fat milk products such as yoghurt, fromage frais or custard (choose products with no sugar or less sugar)

Remember it's important to keep giving your baby different foods, different tastes and different textures. You'll be able to use lots of the foods you already cook for yourself. But there is no need to add any salt or sugar. Just mash it or cut soft food into pieces that your baby can hold.

Finger foods

To begin with, it's better to offer 'sticks' of food that your baby can hold in their fist and suck or bite using their gums. They may not manage to pick up or let go of smaller bite-sized pieces.

These 'finger foods' also encourage babies to chew, even if they have no teeth, and this helps speech muscles to develop. Some babies don't like being spoon-fed and are happier with food they can hold themselves.

Here are some ideas for finger foods that you can offer your baby right from when you start them on solid foods:

- Fingers of toast, bread, pitta bread or chapatti
- Slices of peeled soft ripe fruits such as pear, peach, melon, banana
- Cooked and cooled: green beans, carrot sticks, small florets of cauliflower and broccoli
- Bread sticks or rice cakes (choose lower salt varieties)
- Cooked and cooled pasta shapes

Avoid giving your baby sweet biscuits and rusks so they don't get into the habit of expecting sweet snacks.

It doesn't matter if on some days they spit out their food or seem to play with it rather than eat it, because they will still be getting most of their nourishment from breast milk and/or formula milk.

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Practical tips

Here are some suggestions to help make starting solids easier, safer and more enjoyable.

Go at your baby's pace. Allow plenty of time for feeding, particularly at first. Your baby needs to learn how to move solid food from the front of the tongue to the back of the mouth to swallow it. Food is going to taste and feel different – so it's bound to take time for your baby to get used to it and to learn the new skills they need.

Make sure the food is safe. Babies are particularly at risk of tummy upsets, so good food hygiene is essential. Make sure you heat cooked food thoroughly, let it cool, then stir well and test before offering it to your baby. It's best to dish up only as much as you think your baby will eat because you should throw away any food your baby doesn't eat. Don't reheat cooked food more than once and don't refreeze any food that isn't used. And remember, everything you use for feeding your baby needs to be really clean.

Use a cup (with a lid) for drinks. Using a cup is better for your baby's teeth. Comfort-sucking on a bottle can easily become a habit so it's best to try to avoid this. If you have been breastfeeding your baby, you don't need to start giving them a bottle when you start giving solid foods. You can use a cup for any extra drinks from six months. If you are bottle-feeding, when you start giving solids, use a cup for drinks and aim to have your baby no longer using a bottle for milk or other drinks by a year old. Also see **Which cup should I give to my baby?** on page 23.



Keep a close eye on your baby when he or she is eating to make sure they don't choke. Take particular care with hard foods such as raw carrot sticks or apple pieces, small round foods like grapes and foods with skin such as sausages. Peel and cut food into small pieces, or lightly cook vegetables such as carrots. Make sure there are no bones in fish before you give it to your baby – you might need to look carefully for any small bones.

Don't force feed. Wait for your baby to open their mouth when you are spoon-feeding. Most babies know when they've had enough to eat so don't spend a lot of time trying to get your baby to take food – they may learn that refusing is a good way of getting attention. If they don't seem to like a particular food this time, try again another day. Sometimes you'll need to offer a food more than ten times before your baby will try it.

Encourage your baby to help with feeding.

Babies soon show an interest in feeding themselves if you let them. Encourage them by offering finger foods they can hold during a meal (see page 11 for some suggestions). Let them touch the food in the dish or try giving them a spoon to hold for themselves.

Eat with your baby. Sitting and eating some meals together with you, and the rest of the family, can encourage your baby to try a wider range of foods. Babies like to copy and they will often want to try what you're eating. It also helps them to settle into your meal pattern.

Make mealtimes fun. Some of the first words babies learn are for foods – or the word 'more'. Starting solids opens up a whole new world of learning for your baby. So try to make mealtimes an enjoyable time.



Use home-prepared food when you can.

You just need to mash it up for your baby. This way you'll know the ingredients of the food, and you'll be getting your baby used to what you eat. Breastfed babies get the flavours of their mothers' food through breast milk and so they are more likely to take to foods their mothers eat. Bought baby foods can be useful, but don't let them replace home-prepared foods altogether. Using your own food will probably be cheaper too.

You can offer a wide variety of the foods you normally have in your house, but remember, when you're cooking don't add salt or sugar so your baby can eat the food too.

And if you're using any food products not aimed at babies, remember that many can be high in salt and sugar (see **Check food labels** on page 14).

You can prepare extra food and keep small portions to use later. It's important to cool the food down quickly (within two hours), before putting it in the fridge. Then use it within two days. Or if you have a freezer, cool the food down quickly and freeze it, then use within three months. Reheat the food only once and make sure it's piping hot all the way through, then let it cool before feeding it to your baby.

Check food labels. Remember to check the labels of any foods you want to feed to your baby or to use as ingredients in meals you cook for your baby. Many food products such as sauces, soups, snacks, breakfast cereals and ready meals can be high in salt and sugar. So always try to choose products that are lower in salt and sugar (see page 18 for more on salt and sugar).

Bought foods aimed at babies and young children are only allowed to use a small number of additives. You might want to check the labels of other foods to see if you think they are suitable.

Never use foods for your baby that are past their 'use by' date.

You can offer a wide variety of the foods you normally have in your house, but remember, when you're cooking don't add salt or sugar so your baby can eat the food too.

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Vitamin drops

Once your baby is over six months, you should start giving them vitamin drops containing vitamins A, C and D. However, if you are giving your baby infant formula, you don't need to start giving them vitamins until they are having less than 500ml of formula a day. This is because infant formula already contains added vitamins and minerals.

You can buy children's vitamin drops containing vitamins A, C and D from your local pharmacy. Ask your health visitor or GP where else you can get vitamin drops in your area.

If you or your family get Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Child Tax Credit, you may be able to get free vitamin supplements through Healthy Start. Check with your health visitor or GP.

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It's important to make sure that babies on a vegetarian diet are getting enough energy and aren't getting too much fibre.

Vegetarian diets

Just like other babies, babies on a vegetarian diet should be started on solid foods when they are around six months old.

It's important to make sure that babies on a vegetarian diet are getting enough energy and aren't getting too much fibre.

So make sure you give your baby two servings a day of pulses, such as red lentils, beans and chickpeas, or tofu, soya pieces or well cooked egg.

The vitamin C in fruit and vegetables might help the body absorb the iron in food, so it's even more important that vegetarian babies are given fruit and vegetables at mealtimes.

It's especially important to give vitamin drops to babies who are on a vegetarian diet. See **Vitamin drops** on this page for more advice.

Vegan diets, which contain no foods from animals, can't easily give babies all the energy and nutrients they need. For this reason, vegan diets aren't recommended for young babies. If you want to give your baby a vegan diet, you should talk to a dietitian first.

From nine months

moving onto family meals



As your baby gets more used to eating, you can gradually increase how much you give them. So, by the time your baby is a year old, you should be in a routine of giving three or four meals a day. You might also want to offer a healthy snack between meals depending on your baby's sleeping pattern and how this fits in with mealtimes.

Use a combination of foods to make up each meal, for example rice or mashed potato, vegetables and some meat or lentils. For snacks, give nutritious finger foods that are convenient, easy to prepare and that babies can feed themselves. For example, you could give pieces of fruit or bread and houmous. Fruit or vegetable sticks are a better choice than biscuits, which can contain a lot of added sugar and so could fill your baby up without giving them the nutrients they need. (See page 11 for more finger food suggestions.)

Your baby should be getting used to chewing minced and chopped family foods. They should also be starting to learn to use a spoon to feed themselves.

As solid food becomes a larger part of your baby's diet, it's important to offer a range of different foods to give your baby all the vitamins and minerals they need. Try to give some iron-rich foods. See **Meat, fish, eggs and beans** on the opposite page.

Your baby should still be breastfeeding or offered drinks of formula as before. But if your baby now has a good appetite for solids, and is eating well, you will find they do not want as much milk.

If you are breastfeeding, continue to offer the breast and let your baby decide how much they need. If you are formula-feeding, you will find you can stop giving one or two of the daily milk feeds, but continue giving infant formula until a year old. See **Do I still need to give milk to my baby?** on page 8.

What foods to give

Give some of the following foods every day. The foods should be minced or chopped.

Bread, rice, potatoes and pasta

- Starchy foods, such as potatoes, yam, rice, bread, pasta, couscous, plantain, green banana and unsweetened breakfast cereals.

Always give these starchy foods together with some of the following types of food rather than giving just plain rice or plain pasta.

Fruit and vegetables

- Vegetables – give with most meals.
- Fruit – give as a snack and with meals.

Milk and dairy foods

- Breast milk or infant formula.
- Milk products (yoghurt, fromage frais, small amounts of cheese, milk-based dishes). Choose full-fat versions and don't use low-fat, low-calorie or diet versions. Try to choose products with no (or less) added sugar.

Meat, fish, eggs and beans

- Meat, chicken and fish. Meat and oily fish are good sources of iron.
- Beans, lentils, pulses and well cooked eggs. These provide some iron so give twice a day if you're not giving your baby any meat or fish.

You can continue giving your baby the finger foods described on page 11, plus you can now start including cubes of cheese or sticks of raw vegetables such as peppers, cucumber and carrot.

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As solid food becomes a larger part of your baby's diet, it's important to offer a range of different foods to give your baby all the vitamins and minerals they need.

Foods to avoid up to a year old

All babies under a year old need to avoid the following foods.



Salt

Don't add any salt to the foods you give your baby because a young baby's kidneys can't cope with it. Some foods, such as cheese, sausages and bacon, are high in salt, so remember to limit how much of these foods you let your baby eat.

Baby foods aren't allowed to contain added salt. But any foods you buy that aren't aimed at babies, especially sauces and ready-made porridge, can often be high in salt, so also limit how much of these you let your baby eat and remember to check the label.

It's best not to encourage a liking for salt at any age, so when you're cooking for the family, leave out the salt so your baby can share the food. This is healthier for the rest of the family too.

Most of the salt we eat comes from the food products we buy, so check food labels so you can compare products. Food labels often give figures for sodium rather than salt. Choose lower salt (or lower sodium) versions for your baby whenever you can. Babies under a year should have less than 1g salt per day, which is less than 0.4g sodium. You can use these figures as a guide when you're checking food labels.

Sugar

Sugary foods and drinks can encourage a sweet tooth and lead to tooth decay when your baby's teeth start to come through. Only add sugar to foods if it's really necessary. Sweet puddings, biscuits, sweets and ice creams are not recommended for babies under a year. Also see **Fruit juices** and **Other drinks** on page 22.

Starting solids before six months

If you decide to start your baby on solid foods before six months, check with your health visitor or GP first. There are many foods that should be avoided at this age including foods that contain wheat, gluten, eggs, fish, shellfish, liver, soft and unpasteurised cheeses.

Honey

Don't give honey, even for easing coughs, to your baby until they are a year old. Very occasionally honey contains a type of bacteria that can produce toxins in babies' intestines. This can cause a very serious illness called infant botulism.

Honey is also a sugar, which means, like sugar, it can encourage a sweet tooth and lead to tooth decay.

Nuts

Don't give any whole nuts, including peanuts, to children under five because they could cause choking. Also see **Peanut allergy** on page 20.

Low-fat, low-calorie and high-fibre

It isn't advisable to give 'low-fat', 'low-calorie' or 'high-fibre' foods to babies (also see the advice in **Drinks** on pages 21 to 23).

Babies have small tummies, but are growing fast. They need foods that provide lots of calories and nutrients in a small amount of food, rather than bulky high-fibre foods.

Fat gives them energy and provides some vitamins that are only found in fat. So choose full-fat dairy foods.

Don't give your baby high-fibre versions of foods, especially those with added bran. It stops babies from absorbing important minerals such as calcium and iron. It's better not to give your baby brown rice, wholemeal pasta or bran-enriched breakfast cereals until they are older, although you can give some brown bread.

Fish

Avoid giving any shark, swordfish or marlin. This is because the levels of mercury in these fish can affect a baby's growing nervous system. You should also avoid giving raw shellfish to babies to reduce their risk of getting food poisoning.

Eggs

Don't give raw or lightly cooked eggs to babies. Eggs can be given to babies over six months, but make sure they are thoroughly cooked until both the white and yolk are solid.

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Baby foods aren't allowed to contain added salt. But any foods you buy that aren't aimed at babies, especially sauces and ready-made porridge, can often be high in salt.

Food allergies

If you are concerned that your baby might develop a food allergy, it's a good idea to introduce the foods that are most likely to cause food allergies one at a time from the age of six months and to start with just a small amount. These foods are: egg, milk, soya and wheat (and other cereals that contain gluten such as rye, barley and oats).



Peanut allergy

Peanut allergy seems to be increasing among children, although it is not yet known why. Children from families with a history of allergy are most at risk. If your baby's immediate family has any allergies, asthma or eczema (if they are what is known as 'atopic') the following may help reduce the risk of your baby developing this life-threatening allergy:

- You might want to avoid eating peanuts or peanut products while you are breastfeeding.
- Wait until your child is at least three years old before you give any peanuts, or foods containing peanuts, peanut (groundnut) oil or peanut butter.
- Read ingredients lists carefully and, if you're in doubt, avoid the products.

Cows' milk allergy

If your baby has an allergy to cows' milk, your GP might prescribe hydrolysed protein infant formulas. Babies who are allergic to cows' milk may also be allergic to soya. So only use soya-based infant formulas on the advice of your GP.

Milks based on goats' milk protein have not been approved for use by the European Food Safety Authority for babies under a year old, so don't choose these for your baby.

Most babies with cows' milk allergy are also likely to react to goats' milk and sheep's milk. This is because some of the proteins in these types of milk are similar to those found in cows' milk. The levels of lactose are also similar in these milks, so milks based on goats' milk protein are also unsuitable for babies that are lactose-intolerant. But remember that lactose intolerance is rare in babies.

See **Drinks** on the opposite page for more advice.

Drinks

If you are breastfeeding your baby, you don't need to give them any other drinks (including water), even on hot days, before you start giving solid foods. This is because they can get as much fluid as they need from breast milk.

If you are bottle-feeding, your baby might get thirsty in very hot weather. So you can offer them a little cooled boiled water if they seem thirsty between their feeds.



Milk

Breast milk

This is the best drink for babies up to a year old and beyond. The only alternative to breast milk is infant formula. See **Infant formula** on this page. Carry on giving your baby breast milk (or formula milk) until he or she is at least a year old.

Ordinary (cows') milk

- **Full-fat milk** isn't suitable as a feed or drink until your baby is a year old. This is because it doesn't contain enough iron and other nutrients and it contains too much salt and protein. But you can use ordinary full-fat milk to mix foods when you are cooking for your baby from six months.
- **Semi-skimmed milk** isn't suitable as a drink until a child is two years old.
- **Skimmed milk** isn't suitable until a child is five years old.

Infant formula

- If you want an alternative to breast milk, choose a **cows' milk infant formula** unless you have been advised otherwise by your health professional. Carry on giving your baby formula milk until he or she is at least a year old. Once your baby is six months, you can start giving follow-on milks if you want to, but you don't need to change to follow-on milk at any stage.
- **Hydrolysed protein infant formulas** might be prescribed by your GP if your baby has an allergy to cows' milk.
- Only use **soya-based infant formulas** on the advice of your GP. Babies who are allergic to cows' milk may also be allergic to soya.

Milks based on goats' milk protein have not been approved for use by the European Food Safety Authority for babies under a year old, so don't choose these for your baby.

If you are currently using a milk based on goats' milk protein for feeding your baby, before you make a change it's important to seek the advice of your health professional about the most appropriate type of formula for your baby's needs. See the **Cows' milk allergy** section on page 20 for more information.

Goats' and sheep's milk

These aren't suitable as drinks for babies under a year old because they don't contain the right balance of nutrients to meet your baby's needs, for example they don't contain enough iron. As long as they are pasteurised, goats' and sheep's milk can be used once a baby is a year old.

From six months, you can use a little pasteurised full-fat milk (from cows, goats or sheep) to mix foods for cooking.

Water and other drinks

Once your baby is eating solids three times a day, they may need other drinks as well as breast milk or infant formula, particularly if the weather is hot. The best choice is always water.

Water

Offer small sips of water in a cup with meals. It's a good idea to get your child into the habit of expecting water as a drink, rather than sweet drinks.

For babies under six months, use tap water from the kitchen tap and boil it (water from a bathroom tap may have been sitting in a storage tank and isn't good for drinking). Remember to allow the water to cool before giving it to your baby.

If you are breastfeeding your baby, you don't need to give them any water (or other drinks), even on hot days, before you start giving solid foods. This is because they can get as much fluid as they need from breast milk. If you are bottle-feeding, and in very hot weather your baby seems thirsty between their feeds, offer a little cooled boiled water.

Bottled water isn't a healthier choice than tap water and isn't more sterile. In fact, some natural mineral waters aren't suitable for babies because of the amount of minerals they contain. There is no need to use bottled water, but if you do, make sure you only use bottles that are labelled 'suitable for infant feeding'.

For babies over six months, you don't need to boil water.

Fruit juices

Orange juice, and other fruit juices, are a good source of vitamin C. But fruit juice also contains natural sugars and is acidic, which means it can cause tooth decay.

There is no need to give your baby fruit juice but, if you do offer it, always dilute it one part juice to ten parts of water and offer at mealtimes only.

Other drinks

The following drinks aren't suitable for babies and they could fill them up so they aren't hungry for more nutritious foods:

- juice drinks, fizzy drinks, sugary drinks and squashes
- diet drinks, 'low-calorie' and 'no added sugar' drinks
- flavoured milks and flavoured waters
- baby drinks and herbal drinks
- tea and coffee

Which cup should I give to my baby?

You might need to try a few types before you find a cup that suits you and your baby. An open plastic cup is best – although it can be messy! Or you could choose a cup with a lid and spout that the baby needs to suck on – sometimes known as a ‘sippy cup’.

Whichever one you choose, try to make sure it’s a ‘free flow’ cup, which basically means some drink will come out if you turn it upside down. This means the cup won’t have a special non-spill valve (or sometimes the valve will be removable).

Open or ‘free flow’ cups are best because they help the baby learn to sip and are better for the teeth because the drink is in contact with them for a shorter time.



Going back to work

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There are a number of ways of dealing with feeding when you go back to work. These vary according to how old your baby will be, and how many hours you will be working.

Remember that you don't need to get your baby used to a bottle or cup months in advance of going back to work. Babies learn quickly in their first year, so it's better to wait until just a couple of weeks before your return date.



Under six months

If your baby is under six months, and not yet ready for solid foods, you will need to express your breast milk to give to your baby while you are at work. The alternative is for your baby to be given infant formula.

Just over six months

If your baby is just over six months, and has recently started on solid foods, he or she will still need expressed breast milk or infant formula while you are at work.

From six months, babies can be fed with a cup rather than a bottle. It may be easier for someone other than the breastfeeding mother to feed the baby from a cup or bottle.

Older babies

If your baby is older and eating more solid foods, they won't need so much expressed breast milk or formula. This is because they can satisfy their hunger from solid foods while you are working. If your baby isn't a great eater or isn't feeding well, it's important to let them catch up on breastfeeding when you're together.

You can carry on breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby want to because your breast milk supply will adapt. You could choose to breastfeed in the mornings, evenings, night-times and any time during weekends or other days you are off work.

More information

If you have any questions, talk to your health visitor or GP.

You might also be interested in the following publications.



- **Birth to five** – there is a detailed chapter on ‘Feeding your child’ in the book *Birth to five*, which is published by health departments in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and given free to first-time parents.

You can download *Birth to five* from the Publications section of the Department of Health’s (DH’s) website at:

www.dh.gov.uk/publications – you can use the ‘Publications library’ to search for the publications you are interested in.

- **Weaning** – the DH also produces a booklet on starting solids called *Weaning*. It is available on its website.

- **Ready steady baby** is a book produced by Health Scotland, which provides support to women and families on all issues relating to pregnancy and caring for young children up to approximately one year old. It is given free to all pregnant women in Scotland and is also available online at: www.healthscotland.org.uk/readysteadybaby

- **Fun first foods: An easy guide to introducing solid foods** is a booklet produced by Health Scotland, which provides information and support when introducing your baby to solids. It is available to download at: www.healthscotland.com/publications.aspx

If you would like a copy of any of these publications, speak to your health visitor or GP, or contact your local health promotion unit (or department in Scotland).

- The Welsh Assembly Government produces a number of bilingual weaning resources, which you can download from: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/improvement/children>
- The Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland produces a leaflet called *Weaning made easy: moving from milk to family meals*. It is available to download from the publications section at: www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk or contact your central health promotion resource service in your health and social services board area. You can find the contact details here: www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/healthpromotion/hpni/centralhpservices.htm

Breastfeeding

If you have any questions about breastfeeding, talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP, or get in touch with other mothers who have breastfed. Your midwife or health visitor can give you information about local breastfeeding support groups. You might also be interested in the following publications:

- *Off to the best start* – this leaflet is published by the Department of Health (DH). It is also available on the DH website.
- *Off to a good start: all you need to know about breastfeeding your baby* – this booklet is produced by Health Scotland and the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.

You can download these from their websites or, in Northern Ireland, contact your central health promotion resource service.

- You might also be interested in the Northern Ireland website: www.breastfedbabies.org
- The Welsh Assembly Government has produced a number of bilingual breastfeeding leaflets that can be downloaded from: www.wales.gov.uk/breastfeeding
- For advice on eating while you're breastfeeding, see the Food Standards Agency publication *Eating for breastfeeding*, or visit: eatwell.gov.uk/breastfeeding

Bottle-feeding

• Bottle-feeding formula

See the Department of Health (DH) leaflet *Bottle feeding*. It is available on the DH website.

Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland produces *Bottlefeeding*. This leaflet is available to download from its website or from your central health promotion resource service.

• Expressing breast milk

Breastfeeding and returning to work: a simple guide is produced by Health Scotland.

If you're thinking about having another baby, don't forget to start taking 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid supplements every day.



You can find out more about food at eatwell.gov.uk

Handy guide to introducing solid foods

From birth to six months of age, breast milk or infant formula gives babies all the nourishment they need. This guide shows you what new skills a baby needs to learn when you start giving them solid foods and the new textures you can introduce as your baby grows and learns how to eat solid foods.

| When | New skills to learn | New textures to introduce |
|---|--|--|
| 6 months | | |
| <p>If you choose to introduce solid foods earlier, check with your health visitor or GP first.</p> <p>Don't give any solid foods to your baby before 4 months (17 weeks).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking food from a spoon • moving food from the front of the mouth to the back for swallowing • managing thicker purées and soft mashed food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smooth purées • soft mashed foods |
| 6 – 9 months | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moving lumps of food around the mouth • chewing lumps of food • using hands and fingers to feed themselves • sipping from a cup | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mashed food with soft lumps • soft finger foods • drinks in a beaker or cup with a lid |
| 9 – 12 months | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chewing minced and chopped food • trying to use a spoon to feed themselves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hard finger foods • minced and chopped family foods |

your baby

For more information and advice about food,
visit the Food Standards Agency's websites:

eatwell.gov.uk

food.gov.uk

salt.gov.uk

For further copies of this downloadable booklet,
visit: eatwell.gov.uk/yourbaby

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