



## HEALTHY HABITS

### BREASTFEED AND CHOOSE NUTRITIOUS FOODS FOR YOUR BABY

#### The best approach:

- For around the first 6 months of life, breast milk can supply an infant's nutrition and fluid requirements.
- Start with solid foods around 6 months – first try an iron-fortified cereal and/or an iron rich food such as pureed meat, tofu or legumes. At the start your baby may only eat small amounts and breast milk or formula will be the main food.
- Then add different types of pureed vegetables, fruit and other foods from the Five Food Groups.
- Keep breastfeeding or using infant formula while you introduce other foods. Breastfeeding should continue until the baby is 12 months old, or for as long as both the mother and infant want to keep going.
- Offer a variety of foods from the Five Food Groups and gradually vary the texture, from pureed to soft, to mashed, to minced, as your baby gets older.
- Respond to your baby's cues to know how much food to give them.
- Take care to avoid hard foods to prevent choking.
- Your child should be eating a wide variety of nutritious foods enjoyed by the rest of the family by around 12 months.

#### Remember:

- Get your baby's growth checked regularly.
- If you are having trouble breastfeeding, see your child health nurse, GP, lactation consultant or contact the Australian Breastfeeding Association.
- Don't worry if your baby refuses food, that's normal. Just try another time. If you still have feeding problems contact your health professional.



# Giving your baby the best start

THE BEST FOODS FOR INFANTS

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and *Infant Feeding Guidelines* provide up-to-date advice about the amount and kinds of foods that infants need for health and wellbeing.

#### For more information visit:

[www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)

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**National Health and Medical Research Council**

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## WHAT ARE THE DIETARY GUIDELINES AND INFANT FEEDING GUIDELINES?

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and *Infant Feeding Guidelines* provide up-to-date advice about the amount and kinds of foods that we need to eat for health and wellbeing. They are based on scientific evidence and research.

## WHAT'S THE BEST FOOD FOR MY BABY?

Breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. It is unique, provides all the nutrients your baby needs for around the first 6 months and is an important source of nutrients beyond 6 months. Research shows breastfeeding protects babies against infection, obesity and some other chronic diseases such as diabetes, later in life.

## IS BREASTFEEDING BEST FOR EVERYONE?

Breastfeeding is best however sometimes this is not possible. All mothers need support from family and friends in choosing what is best for them. If you require support with breastfeeding or any aspect of infant feeding, talk to your child health nurse or a lactation consultant to work out the best approach to feeding your baby.

Babies who are not breastfed need an infant formula. Infant formula needs to be strictly prepared according to the instructions and always use the scoop that came in the can. Soy and goat's milk-based formulas are not recommended for infants, unless on medical advice.



## STARTING OTHER FOODS

At around 6 months babies are ready for other foods. They can begin to use spoons and sip from a cup. Don't wait too long after 6 months because your baby needs nutrients from other foods to continue to grow and develop, particularly iron-rich and iron-fortified foods. Continue breastfeeding while introducing solid foods.

Start with small amounts of iron-fortified cereal or pureed foods on a spoon. It is likely that most of it could end up on the floor or on your baby! But that is just part of learning. Babies may need to be offered foods many times before they learn to like them.

## ANYTHING ELSE I NEED TO KNOW?

Dummies or pacifiers are best avoided for the first month while you are beginning to breastfeed. Babies are at higher risk of food poisoning, so take care in preparing their food. Use clean hands, equipment and surfaces. Use freshly cooked food or cool foods quickly in the fridge and use within one day or freeze. Keep an eye on your baby's eating to watch for choking. Also, if you think your baby has had a reaction to any foods, or you still have questions or concerns, see your GP or a health professional.

## FOODS UNSUITABLE FOR INFANTS

### INFANTS ENJOY SIMPLE TASTES, SO AVOID FOODS WITH ADDED FAT, SALT OR SUGARS

#### Tips on foods to limit or avoid

- Don't give babies soft drinks, fruit juice, fruit drinks, coffee, all teas, soy, rice or other cereal drinks.
- Babies should not be fed honey or raw eggs.
- Avoid hard foods like nuts and raw carrots that could lead to choking.
- Cook baby foods yourself from fresh ingredients whenever you can, but don't add sugars or salt. Using frozen or canned foods is okay too, as long as they don't have added sugars or salt.
- Commercial baby foods are fine from time to time but babies need to try a wide range of tastes and textures.

*Children can drink full cream milk after 12 months and reduced-fat milk after 2 years.*

