Guide to Baby Feeding

Breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. Breast milk or infant formula is all your baby needs for around the first 6 months.

**STAGE 1**
**AROUND 6 months but not before 4 months**

**FIRST FOODS**

Offer milk before solids. Breast milk or formula is still the most important food.

**Signs baby is ready for food:**
Your baby:
• is holding their head up well.
• is interested in watching you eat.
• still seems hungry after a milk feed.
• opens their mouth when food/spoon approaches.

Every baby is different and some will be ready for solids earlier than others. Introduce solids around 6 months (but not before 4 months).

**Feeding tips:**
Start by offering a small amount of food after a milk feed, just ½-2 tsps. Begin with one small meal a day and slowly increase the amount of food you offer. Offer one new food every 2-4 days. Once a new food is introduced, you can mix it with other foods your baby has already tried.

**Texture of first foods:**
Smooth, runny or pureed.

**Examples of Stage 1 Foods:**
- Iron fortified rice cereal
- Cooked pureed fruit & veggies e.g. Apple, pear, apricot, peach, carrot, pumpkin, kumara, potato, kamokamo
- Smoothly mashed banana, avocado
- Cooked pureed meat, chicken, fish
- Cooked pureed legumes & lentils and rice
- Wattie’s blue label cereals, jars, cans & pouches

**Examples of Stage 2 Foods: add to stage 1 foods**
- Cooked mashed broccoli, parsnips cauliflower, puha
- Kiwifruit
- Cooked egg
- Tofu and tempeh
- Cooked pasta & noodles
- Cheese, yoghurt, cottage cheese, custard
- Baby ground cereals, crackers, bread (white or wholemeal)
- Wattie’s red label cereals, jars, cans & pouches

**STAGE 2**
**AROUND 7 months**

**Offer milk before solids. Breast milk or formula is still the most important food.**

At this stage your baby may be:
• starting to sit unsupported.
• learning to chew & bite, and may have teeth.
• leaning towards food or spoon.
• interested in finger foods.
• taking sips of water from a cup.

**Feeding tips:**
Try mixed ingredient foods with a range of tastes. Introduce new foods suitable for stage 2 (see carrot guide). Baby may eat between 2 Tbsps and 1/2 cup food at each meal. Every baby’s appetite is different. Offer baby 2 or 3 meals a day.

**Texture of stage 2 foods:**
Thicker purées, small soft lumps and mashed foods.

**Offer more variety of foods in different sizes and textures. Offer some finger foods now.**

**Common questions about feeding your baby:**

**Which first foods are a good source of iron?**
Iron-rich foods include baby cereal, cooked pureed meat, and chicken. Some iron is also found in fish, cooked pureed lentils, dried peas and beans.

**Why are there ingredients in stage 1 & 2 baby foods, which I thought were only suitable for older babies?**
Some ingredients in supermarket bought baby foods (e.g. sweetcorn, kiwifruit and milk (in custards) etc) may be given to baby earlier than if prepared at home, because the commercial cooking process makes them easier to digest.

**How does supermarket bought baby food compare to homemade?**
Supermarket bought baby foods in NZ are required to meet strict safety & nutrition standards so they provide a wholesome, nutritious option for your baby.

**Did you know?**
You don’t need to add sugar, salt, butter, cream or margarine to baby food. It may taste bland to adults, but it’s appealing to babies. Fast food is often high in salt and fat. While it is a treat for adults, it shouldn’t be given to babies.

For more answers to your baby feeding questions, visit Forbaby.co.nz or call our health professionals on the Forbaby Careline 0800 55 66 66.

Wattie’s baby food recipes are created in our specialist baby food kitchen and approved by the Independent Nutrition Advisory Group, including Plunket. Our ingredients are carefully selected, blended and steam cooked to lock in the flavour, making delicious meals for little tummies.
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Milk feeds are still important but offer AFTER solids. Baby should still be having breast milk, or around 600mL of formula a day.

At this stage your baby may be:
- chewing & biting well.
- eating more independently, but still needing help.
- showing interest in many foods & textures.
- taking swallows of water from a cup.

Feeding tips:
Offer more variety of foods in different sizes and textures.
Serve some food as finger food.
Introduce new foods suitable for stage 3 (see carrot guide).
Offer baby 3 meals a day, with 1 or 2 small snacks in-between.

Texture of stage 3 foods:
Offer minced, chopped, grated and small finger food.

Increase texture of food to more chunky, but still soft.

Cows’ milk or a toddler milk can now be introduced as a main milk drink, or continue with breast milk or formula.

At this stage your toddler may be:
- feeding themselves with their fingers.
- wanting to use a spoon to feed themselves.
- holding a cup with 2 hands to drink water.
- chewing food well.
- biting through a variety of textures.

Feeding tips:
Your toddler is ready for a wider variety of family foods and finger foods.
Some foods may still need to be cut up to a suitable size.
Toddler can join in with family mealtimes, and needs 3 meals a day with small snacks in-between.
Offer milk after food or in-between meals, around 500 mL a day is enough for most toddlers.

Texture of toddler foods:
Increase texture of food to varied and challenging.

Finger foods, cut up pieces of food, soft chunky food, minced, grated foods.

Common questions about feeding your baby:

Q: How do I know my baby has eaten enough food?
A: Healthy babies are good at regulating their food intake so they get just what they need. When your baby has eaten enough they may refuse food, turn their head away from the spoon, cry, or clamp their mouth shut. Never force your baby to eat more than they want.

Q: What is the difference between organic baby food and regular baby food?
A: Organically grown foods are produced without using synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. While organic food offers a good choice, the use of pesticides is strictly regulated in all food production. All baby foods sold in NZ must comply with stringent nutritional and safety standards and so offer a good option for your baby.

Q: Can my baby have lumpy foods if he doesn’t have teeth yet?
A: Babies don’t need teeth to eat soft lumpy food. Their gums are hard and they can ‘munch’ soft lumps. As baby gets older it’s important to offer more lumpy & textured food to assist normal chewing, swallowing and speech development.

Q: What should my baby drink?
A: Other than breast milk or infant formula the best drink for your baby is water. Don’t offer fruit juice, cordial, fizzy drink, chocolate or malt drinks as these are high in sugar. Never give coffee, tea or alcohol to your baby as these drinks can harm your baby’s health. Never leave your baby to suck on a bottle for a long time as the natural sugars in milk can cause tooth decay.

Did you know?
Even though stage 1 & 2 baby foods are suitable for younger babies, you can still offer these to older babies too. Just make sure you offer a variety of new foods with more challenging tastes & textures (see stage 3 foods for more ideas).

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For every Wattie’s baby food product you buy, Wattie’s makes a financial contribution to Plunket. All Wattie’s for baby recipes are approved by the Independent Nutrition Advisory Group including Plunket. Enjoy discovering new tastes and textures with confidence.