

Infancy Visit #11

- 4 Month Growth & Development
 - Introducing Solids



Topics for Next Visit:

- PIPE: Each Child is Different

Month 4: What's Next?

At four months I might:

- Push up with my arms when I'm on my tummy
- Kick my legs when lying on my back
- Start trying to roll over
- Hold my head steady when I'm sitting
- Grasp a rattle or object with hand
- Coo and laugh out loud

You can help me learn!

- Hold a cookie sheet at my feet. Let me bang my feet against it.
- Give me a spoon to grasp. Let me chew on it, bang it, swipe it, or drop it.
- Try to make me laugh. Jump up and down. Make faces. Talk in different voices. What do I like best?
- Play mimicking games. Respond to the my sounds. See if I imitate your sounds.
- Play soft music for me. Notice my response.

SAFETY CHECK

I'm starting to move around more, & I'm very curious.

Be sure that:

- Things I can choke on are out of reach.
- Someone has a hand on me when I'm not in my crib or on the floor.
- I'm not left alone with young children.
- Cords that hang down are secured.

Your baby at 4 months

Baby's Name _____

Baby's Age _____

Today's Date _____

Milestones matter! How your baby plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your baby has reached by 4 months. Take this with you and talk with your baby's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your baby has reached and what to expect next.



What most babies do by this age:

Social/Emotional Milestones

- ☐ Smiles on his own to get your attention
- ☐ Chuckles (not yet a full laugh) when you try to make her laugh
- ☐ Looks at you, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention

Language/Communication Milestones

- ☐ Makes sounds like "oooo", "aahh" (cooing)
- ☐ Makes sounds back when you talk to him
- ☐ Turns head towards the sound of your voice

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- ☐ If hungry, opens mouth when she sees breast or bottle
- ☐ Looks at his hands with interest

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- ☐ Holds head steady without support when you are holding her
- ☐ Holds a toy when you put it in his hand
- ☐ Uses her arm to swing at toys
- ☐ Brings hands to mouth
- ☐ Pushes up onto elbows/forearms when on tummy

Other important things to share with the doctor...

- What are some things you and your baby do together?
- What are some things your baby likes to do?
- Is there anything your baby does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your baby lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your baby have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

You know your baby best. Don't wait. If your baby is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your baby's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your baby more; and
2. Call your state or territory's early intervention program to find out if your baby can get services to help. Learn more and find the number at cdc.gov/FindEI.

For more on how to help your baby, visit cdc.gov/Concerned.

**Don't wait.
Acting early can make
a real difference!**



Download CDC's
free Milestone
Tracker app



American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

Month 4: What's New?

Things I did this month:



So big!
Look how much I've grown...

My weight: _____

My length: _____

My clothing size: _____

Learning about me...

When you talk to me softly, I: _____

When you laugh and giggle at me, I: _____

When I hear soft music, I: _____

When I hear other noises in the house, I: _____

Learning about you...

Music can be good for me! What kind of music is your favorite?

What might be good for me about your favorite music?

What might be not-so-good for me about your favorite music?

Which type of music do you think I like?

How do I respond when you play music?



Help your baby learn and grow

As your baby's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your baby's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your baby's development.



- Respond positively to your baby. Act excited, smile, and talk to him when he makes sounds. This teaches him to take turns "talking" back and forth in conversation.
- Provide safe opportunities for your baby to reach for toys, kick at toys and explore what is around her. For example, put her on a blanket with safe toys.
- Allow your baby to put safe things in his mouth to explore them. This is how babies learn. For example, let him see, hear, and touch things that are not sharp, hot, or small enough to choke on.
- Talk, read, and sing to your baby. This will help her learn to speak and understand words later.
- Limit screen time (TV, phones, tablets, etc.) to video calling with loved ones. Screen time is not recommended for children younger than 2 years of age. Babies learn by talking, playing, and interacting with others.
- Feed only breast milk or formula to your baby. Babies are not ready for other foods, water or other drinks for about the first 6 months of life.
- Give your baby safe toys to play with that are easy to hold, like rattles or cloth books with colorful pictures for her age.
- Let your baby have time to move and interact with people and objects throughout the day. Try not to keep your baby in swings, strollers, or bouncy seats for too long.
- Set steady routines for sleeping and feeding.
- Lay your baby on her back and show her a bright-colored toy. Move the toy slowly from left to right and up and down to see if she watches how the toy moves.
- Sing and talk to your baby as you help her "exercise" (move her body) for a few minutes. Gently bend and move her arms and legs up and down.

To see more tips and activities download CDC's Milestone Tracker app.

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

www.cdc.gov/ActEarly | 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



Download CDC's
free Milestone
Tracker app



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Dad's Days: 4 Months

Dad's
Days: 4
Months



LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

Babies like music. Listening to music is fun. It's a good way to play with baby. Music can be calming or exciting.

Music helps babies get ready to learn math!

Ways I can enjoy music with my baby:

Many new dads worry about:

- Money & providing for the family
- Taking care of baby the "right" way
- Their relationship with baby's mom.

Things that worry me:

In what ways are you good at caregiving?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changing diapers | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving baths |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calming baby | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting breastfeeding or giving bottles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing what baby needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing with baby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting baby to sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

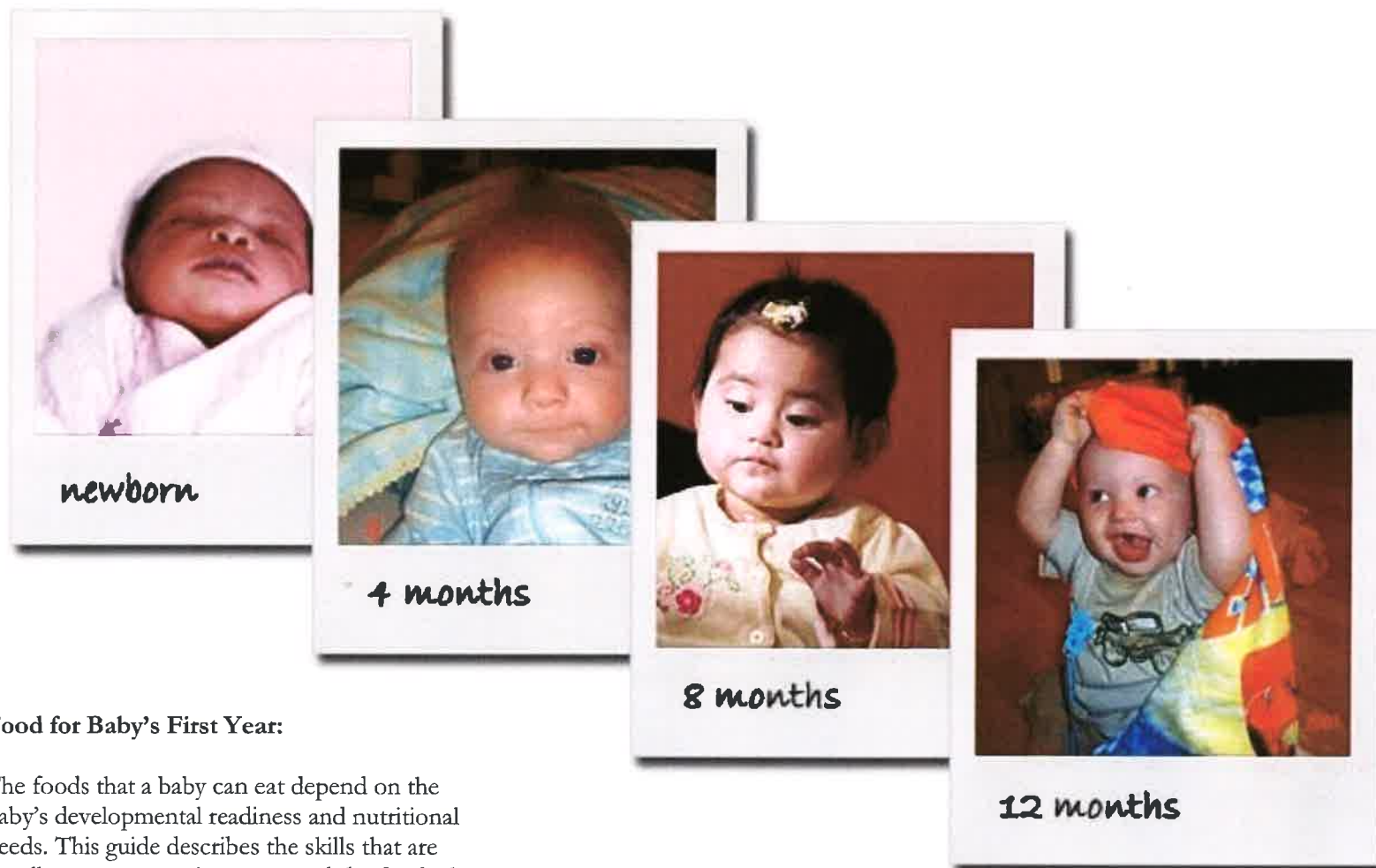
Where do dads learn about parenting?

As a child, who made you feel loved, safe, and important?

What did they do to make you feel that way?

Things I can do to make my baby feel loved, safe, and important:



A Guide to Infant Feeding: The First 12 Months




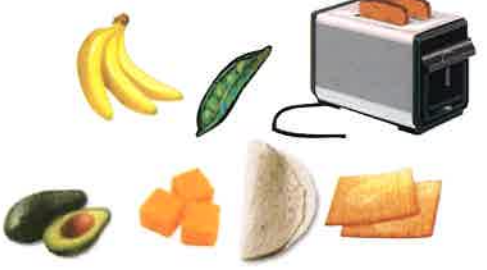
Food for Baby's First Year:

The foods that a baby can eat depend on the baby's developmental readiness and nutritional needs. This guide describes the skills that are usually present at various ages and the foods that the baby is ready to eat.

A Guide to Infant Feeding: The First 12 Months



Age & Skills	Suggested Foods & Feeding Methods	Foods To Try
Birth <i>Suckles</i> <i>Controls head movement</i>	<u>For the first year:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breast milk Iron-fortified infant formula <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Always <i>hold</i> baby when giving a bottle. 	 
4 – 6 Months <i>Controls head movement</i> <i>Sits with support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breast milk Iron-fortified infant formula 	

A Guide to Infant Feeding: The First 12 Months

Age & Skills	Suggested Foods & Feeding Methods	Foods To Try
<p>6 – 8 Months</p> <p><i>Sits with support</i></p> <p><i>Chews</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strained or pureed meat, chicken, fish, beans, cottage cheese, plain yogurt, cooked eggs, tofu • Strained or pureed vegetables and fruits • Iron-fortified infant cereal. Rice cereal fortified with iron is a good source of nutrients for your baby, but it shouldn't be the only source. Offer other fortified infant cereals including oat, barley and multigrain. Feed cereal from a spoon only. • Offer plain foods, without added salt or sugar • Offer a variety of foods • Give baby one new food at a time and wait at least 2 days before giving baby another new food. Check after each new food for any allergic reactions such as diarrhea, rash, or vomiting. Contact your doctor immediately if any of these occur. 	
<p>7 – 9 Months</p> <p><i>Grasps</i></p> <p><i>Holds</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other infant cereals: wheat*, mixed grains • Mashed fruits & vegetables • Finger foods: toast squares, unsalted soda crackers, soft tortillas, cooked vegetable strips or slices, soft fruit wedges or slices (peeled), cheese • Well-cooked pasta and well-cooked chicken. • Begin teaching baby to drink from a small cup. Offer water: • Let baby begin to feed self 	

*PLEASE be sure to consult with your pediatrician if you are in doubt and unsure about wheat for your baby. This is very important as your infant may have a special situation and the general recommendations may not apply.

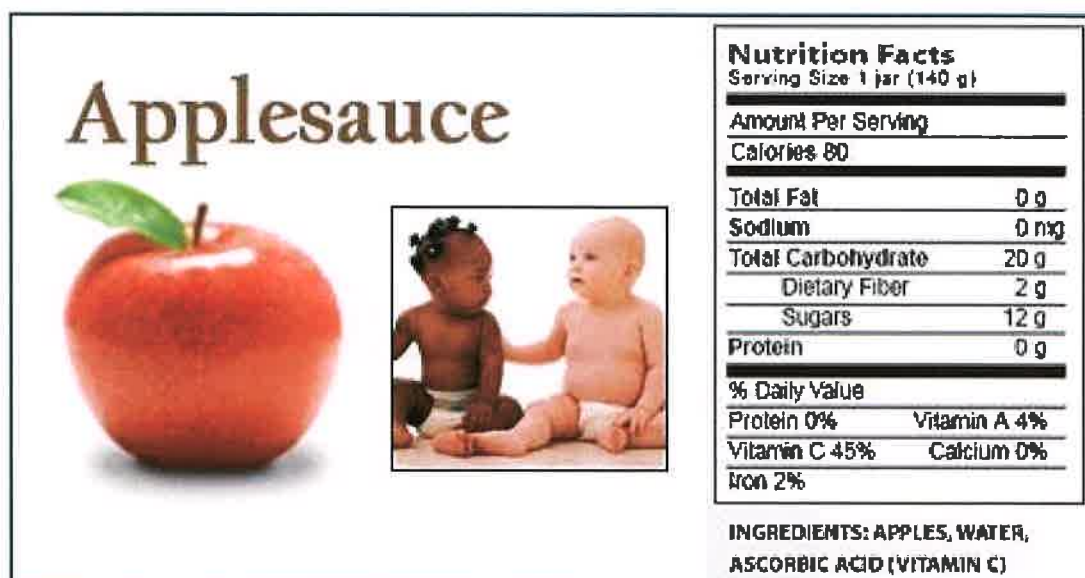
A Guide to Infant Feeding: The First 12 Months

Age & Skills	Suggested Foods & Feeding Methods	Foods To Try
9 – 12 Months <i>Improves coordination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mashed or chopped food from the family meal Begin encouraging baby to feed self with spoon Gradually decrease number of feedings from breast or bottle as baby eats more food 	
1 Year <i>Feeds self</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce whole milk May introduce fruit juice but no more than 4ozs per day Offer 3 meals a day, plus snacks Serve beverages from a cup 	

Baby Food: Store-Bought and Homemade

Store-bought baby foods are safe, healthy, and good for your baby. Below are some tips for buying baby food:

- Look at the “use-by” date on the package. If the date has passed, do not buy or use the baby food.
- Buy baby food jars that are clean on the outside and do not have a broken vacuum seal. (The seal is broken if the button in the center of the top is popped out.)
- Read the ingredient list and the nutrition label on the food package. Avoid baby foods containing added salt, sugar, or other ingredients that are non-nutritious.



Definitions:

% Daily Value shows how a food fits into the overall daily diet of the child. It shows what percent of the nutrient is provided from one serving of the food to meet the daily dietary needs of the child.

Serving Size is the basis on which manufacturers declare the nutrient amounts and % Daily Values on the label. It is the amount of food customarily eaten at one time.

Baby Food: Store-Bought and Homemade



You may decide that you would like to make your own baby food. Below are some tips for making homemade baby food:

- Choose a food to make for your baby. The best first foods for babies include bananas, apples, pears, peaches, butternut squash, sweet potatoes, peas, and green beans.
- Peel the fruit or vegetable and cut it into small pieces. Steam or bake the food until it is soft. Allow the food to cool and then use a food processor or blender to puree the food. Add water, formula, or breast milk as needed to get the right texture.
- There is no need to add salt or sugar. You could try a bit of lemon juice as both a preservative and a natural flavor enhancer.
(Note: Giving baby citrus before 12 months of age is not recommended.)
- You can make enough for several meals at a time. To store the food:
 - Pour the freshly-cooked and pureed food into an ice cube tray.
 - Cover with cellophane wrap and freeze.
 - Remove the frozen food cubes from the tray and place in air-tight freezer bags.
 - Label all your freezer packages with contents and date. Homemade baby foods can be safely kept frozen for three months.
 - Remove one serving-size cube at a time when needed. For slow thawing, place a day's worth of baby food in the refrigerator. It will thaw in about four hours. If you use a microwave to thaw or warm baby food, be sure to stir the food well to avoid hot pockets.

Infant Feeding Recommendations

When it comes to infant feeding there are many recommendations and various health and safety reasons for them.



Infant Feeding Tips

When first introducing solid food, offer single-food items (not infant dinners or combinations of food).

A

Offer fruit instead of sweets if you give baby dessert.

O

Offer small portions of food – starting with just half a spoonful or less and gradually increasing over time.

C O

Do not put baby to bed with a bottle.

C E T

Stay with your child while they are eating.

A C

Do not add sugar or salt to your baby's food.

O

Do not give baby nuts and seeds, whole grapes, popcorn, thick peanut butter, hot dogs, raw vegetables, marshmallows, or hard candy.

C

Optional Activity:

Using letters from the key below, fill in the blue box(es) above to match the recommendation with the corresponding health or safety risk.

Key for Risks:

A = Allergy
C = Choking
E = Ear Infection
O = Obesity
T = Tooth Decay



- ✓ **Can your baby hold their head up?** Your baby should be able to sit in a high chair or infant seat with steady head and neck control.
- ✓ **Does your baby open their mouth when food is around?** Babies may be ready if they watch you eating, reach for, and seem interested in your food!
- ✓ **Can your baby swallow food from spoon?** Your baby is ready when they accept a spoon in their mouth and can roll their tongue back to swallow. If they push the spoon out of their mouth or food dribbles onto their chin, they may not be ready yet. Wait a couple weeks and try again.
- ✓ **Is your baby big enough?** Usually, infants have doubled their birth weight and weigh at least 13 pounds before they are ready for solid foods.

What signs of readiness is your baby showing you?

WHAT

For most babies, their first food can be your choice! Just keep a few things in mind:

- Start with soft or pureed food to prevent choking.
- Consider iron-rich foods such as meat, green vegetables, or iron-fortified infant cereal.
- Offer single-ingredient foods.

What first foods do you want to try with your baby? _____

HOW

- ✓ Start with 1 or 2 tablespoons of solid food a day and make it fun! Continue to offer human milk and/or formula.
- ✓ Introduce each new food for 3 to 5 days and monitor for allergic reactions. Check out more info about food allergies [here!](#)
- ✓ After your child eats the first few foods without problems, you can start to introduce more highly allergic food (eggs, soy, peanut, fish) if they are soft and pureed.
- ✓ Wait until after your child's first birthday to offer dairy milk, honey, and juice.
- ✓ Microwaves often heat unevenly and can burn baby's mouth. The best way to warm food is to put the container in a bowl of hot water. If you choose to use the microwave to heat baby's food, always stir the food to reduce hot spots, let stand 30 seconds, and test the temperature to make sure it is lukewarm.
- ✓ Do not put infant cereal in a bottle (unless directed by your baby's health care provider) because your baby could choke. It may also cause your baby to gain more weight than is recommended.



SAFETY FIRST!



Baby-Led Weaning

You may have heard about a method of introducing solid foods called Baby-Led Weaning. It is also sometimes known as Baby-Led Feeding. It involves skipping spoon-fed purees and instead letting the baby self-feed. Soft pieces of food are offered to the baby and on their own they move food to their mouth, chew (or mash with their gums), and swallow it. There are good and not so good aspects to this method of solid food introduction.

Benefits of Baby-Led Weaning

- Focuses on developmental readiness
- Supports children and adults eating the same food
- Fosters independence as baby gets to control how much they eat
- Invites various textures early which may impact food preferences later



There is not enough research on Baby-Led Weaning to recommend it as the best approach to starting solids. However, if you are interested in learning more, check out tips on the next page.

Concerns with Baby-Led Weaning

- Possible delay of solid food introduction
- Child may be missing important nutrients like iron or zinc
- Potential loss of parent-child interaction
- Choking hazards if food isn't prepared appropriately

Tips for safe Baby-Led Weaning

- It is important to note that Baby-Led Weaning might not benefit every baby. Starting solids with pureed foods may be best for children with developmental delays or neurological issues. Check with your child's health care provider.
- Parents need to be extra careful about choking with Baby-Led Weaning. The best way to safeguard your baby is to complete training that teaches first aid for choking and infant CPR. Below is how to tell the difference between gagging and choking and what to do to support your child.

Gagging

- Babies have a protective reflex against choking
- When gagging, they usually get red in the face
- Their tongue may push forward, and they can cough or sputter
- Stay close and let them work through it

Choking

- The airway is blocked when babies are choking
- Baby's lips or face might start to turn blue
- They are usually silent
- Start first aid for choking. Call 911 if child cannot breathe, appears pale, has a weak cough, becomes unconscious or the obstruction will not clear.

- Provide human milk or infant formula 30-60 minutes prior to feeding so baby is satisfied before exploring solid food
 - Stay with your child, minimize distractions, and avoid hurrying your child during feeding
 - Provide one food at a time and wait 3-5 days between new foods to monitor for any allergic reactions
 - Consider preparing the same meal for the whole family, but remember to modify for your practicing eater

Foods appropriate for Baby-Led Weaning:

- ✓ spears of soft, ripe fruits like pear, mango, banana, peaches
- ✓ strips of baked or steamed soft veggies like sweet potatoes or carrots
- ✓ ground meat or soft shredded strips of meat

Foods that could be choking hazards:

- ✗ whole grapes
- ✗ chips and popcorn
- ✗ nuts
- ✗ raw hard veggies like baby carrots
- ✗ thick peanut butter

Giving Baby Water



Should I give my baby water to drink?

Babies under six months old should not have water to drink. Breastmilk or formula has all the water your baby needs.

Why not give water to drink?

Drinking water can fill baby's tummy. This makes baby drink less breastmilk or formula. The baby gets less milk, and may not grow as well.

Drinking water too early can cause problems with baby's kidneys.

When can I give water to drink?

When your baby is 6 months old, you can try giving water. Giving baby a few sips of water each day is fine and fun. Give water in a cup or sippy, not a bottle.

After age 1, baby can drink as much water as he or she would like. Water and milk are the best drinks for children of that age.



Giving Baby Water

How do I teach my baby to use a cup?

You can start teaching your child to drink from a cup as early as 4-6 months. Try to change from a bottle to a cup by your child's first birthday or soon after.



Give me a cup with a small amount of water. Show me how to drink out of my cup.



I will be messy! Give me a bib and cover the floor.



Offer me the cup once a day at first. Let me get used to it. It may take me a while to learn to drink from a cup.



Get me a cup with a snap-on lid. A spout and handles also help.



Don't make me drink from a cup when I am tired or cranky.



Give me a blanket or a stuffed animal when I am missing my bottle.



Don't let me take a bottle to bed with me. It is bad for my teeth.

What to Feed, How Much, & When



How much should my baby eat?

Age	How much in 24 hours?
0 - 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breastfed babies: Nurse 8 - 12 times• Formula fed babies: Drink up to 32 ounces
4 - 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breastfed babies: Nurse 5 - 7 times• Formula fed babies: Drink up to 32 ounces
6 - 8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breastfed babies: Nurse as baby desires• Formula fed babies: Drink up to 32 ounces• 3 - 9 tablespoons of infant cereal• 2 - 8 tablespoons of pureed fruits• 2 - 8 tablespoons of pureed vegetables
8 - 10 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breastfed babies: Nurse as baby desires• Formula fed babies: Drink up to 32 ounces• $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cups infant cereal• $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cups mashed fruits• $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cups mashed vegetables• 3 - 5 tablespoons dairy• 4 - 8 tablespoons protein
10 - 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breastfed babies: Nurse as baby desires• Formula fed babies: Drink up to 32 ounces• $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cups infant cereal• $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cups mashed fruits• $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cups mashed vegetables• 5 tablespoons dairy• 4 - 8 tablespoons protein• 4 - 8 tablespoons combo foods (like casseroles)



Heavy Metals in Baby Food

Recent news about heavy metals found in baby food can leave parents with a lot of questions.

Here's some information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about the risk of toxic metal exposure to children, and how to help minimize it.

Can heavy metals in baby food harm my baby?

The low levels of heavy metals found in baby foods likely are a relatively small part of a child's overall toxic metal exposure risk. However, exposure from all sources should be minimized. Toxic metal exposure can be harmful to the developing brain. It's been linked with problems with learning, cognition, and behavior. But keep in mind that many genetic, social, and environment factors influence healthy brain development, and toxic metal exposure is just one of these factors.



How do heavy metals get into foods?

Metals are found naturally in the Earth's crust. They also are released into our environment as pollution and get into the water and soil used to grow food. Metals can also get into food from food manufacturing and packaging. Some of the most common metals that get into food, according to the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, include inorganic arsenic ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Arsenic-Health-Effects-and-Exposure.aspx](https://www.fda.gov/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Arsenic-Health-Effects-and-Exposure.aspx)), lead ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Lead-Screening-for-Children.aspx](https://www.fda.gov/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Lead-Screening-for-Children.aspx)), cadmium (<https://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/Metals/ucm521427.htm>), and mercury (<https://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/Metals/ucm2006760.htm>).

How can I reduce my baby's exposure to toxic metals?

Stronger rules and regulations for testing and limiting the amount of heavy metals in foods for babies and toddlers are most important. But there are several steps parents can take now to reduce the risk that kids will be exposed to toxic metals in their diet, and from other sources:

- **Serve a variety of foods.** Give your child a well-balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits, vegetables (wash in cool water before preparing and serving), grains, and lean protein. Eating a variety of healthy foods that are rich in essential nutrients can lower the exposure to toxic metals and other contaminants found in some foods.
- **Read the labels.** Multi-ingredient baby food blends may be a good option. Be aware that many have the same first or second ingredient, though. Different flavor blends, like kale/pear and spinach/pumpkin, for example, may actually both have sweet potatoes as their first ingredient. It's important to read the ingredients label to be sure you are offering a true variety of foods.
- **Switch up your grains.** Fortified infant cereals can be a good source of nutrition for babies, but rice cereal does not need to be the first or only cereal used. Rice tends to absorb more arsenic ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Arsenic-Health-Effects-and-Exposure.aspx](https://www.fda.gov/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Arsenic-Health-Effects-and-Exposure.aspx)) from groundwater than other crops. You can include a variety of grains in your baby's diet, including oat, barley, couscous, quinoa, farro, and bulgur. Multi-grain infant cereals can be a good choice. Try to avoid using rice milk and brown rice syrup, which is sometimes used as a sweetener in processed toddler foods.

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Tips for choosing & cooking rice for your children

Keep in mind that, among different types of rice, brown rice tends to have the highest arsenic levels. White basmati and sushi rice tends to have lower levels. When making rice from scratch, rinse it first. Cook it in extra water and then drain off the excess when it's done.

- **Check your water.** Heavy metals can get into tap water: for example, arsenic can contaminate well water, and older pipes may contain lead. You can contact your local health department to have your water tested if this is a concern.
- **Breastfeed if possible.** Breastfeeding, rather than formula feeding, also can help reduce exposure to toxic metals. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends ([/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Where-We-Stand-Breastfeeding.aspx](#)) breastfeeding as the sole source of nutrition for your baby for about 6 months.
- **Avoid fruit juice.** Offer toddlers and young children sliced or pureed whole fruits rather than juice ([/english/healthy-living/nutrition/pages/fruit-juice-and-your-childs-diet.aspx](#)). Some fruit juices can contain concerning levels of heavy metals. Plus, juice is high in sugar and not as nutrient rich as whole fruit. Stick with breast milk or formula for babies under 6 months old, and water ([/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Choose-Water-for-Healthy-Hydration.aspx](#)) and milk after they reach age 1.
- **Make healthy fish choices.** Some types of fish can be high in a form of mercury called methylmercury, and other metals. Of most concern are large, predatory fish that eat other fish and live longer, such as shark, orange roughy, swordfish, and albacore/white tuna. Eating too much contaminated fish can harm a child's developing nervous system. But fish is also an excellent source of protein and other nutrients children need, and many are low in mercury. Look for better options ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Protecting-Your-Children-From-Contaminated-Fish.aspx](#)) like light tuna (solid or chunk), salmon, cod, whitefish, and pollock.
- **Consider homemade baby food.** There are several benefits to making your own baby food ([/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx](#)) fresh at home: it can be cost-effective, avoids potential contaminants from processing or packaging, and you can choose the ingredients. But keep in mind that offering a variety of foods is just as important when making your own baby food as when shopping for prepared baby foods.
- **Address lead hazards in your home.** There are other important ways to help reduce your baby's exposure to toxic metals. The most common source of lead exposure, for example, is from peeling or chipping paint from older homes. Soil, some cosmetics and spices, water, and certain occupations and hobbies can also be sources of exposure. Find more information about lead here ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Lead-Screening-for-Children.aspx](#)).
- **Don't smoke or vape.** Secondhand and thirdhand ([/English/health-issues/conditions/tobacco/Pages/How-Parents-Can-Prevent-Exposure-Thirdhand-Smoke.aspx](#)) smoke from both regular and e-cigarettes ([/English/health-issues/conditions/tobacco/Pages/Facts-For-Parents-About-E-Cigarettes-Electronic-Nicotine-Delivery-Systems.aspx](#)), may expose children to metals such as cadmium and lead. Vaping allows toxic metals from the vape coils to get into the air and be inhaled. Secondhand smoke also contains harmful chemicals that can increase the risk of cancer.

Is organic baby food better?

Organic baby foods may have lower levels of certain pesticides and other chemicals. Because heavy metals are found in the soil and can get into prepared foods from processing, however, organic foods often contain similar levels of heavy metals as non-organic foods.

Should my baby be tested for heavy metal exposure?

Until more information about metals in baby foods becomes available, experts say there's no need to get children tested. Tests that look at a child's hair for toxic metal exposure also are not recommended, since this type of testing is scientifically unproven and often inaccurate.

Talk with your pediatrician:

If you're concerned about metals exposure in your child, talk with your pediatrician. Your regional Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (<http://www.pehsu.net/>) (PEHSU) have staff who can also talk with parents about concerns over environmental toxins.

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More information

- Ask the Pediatrician: Is it OK to make my own baby food? (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-OK-to-make-my-own-baby-food.aspx>)
- Food Additives: What Parents Should Know (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Food-Additives.aspx>)
- Is Homemade Baby Formula Safe? (</English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/Is-Homemade-Baby-Formula-Safe.aspx>)
- Heavy Metals in Baby Food and Fruit Juice: Advice for Parents From Environmental Pediatricians (https://nyscheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NYSCEHC_HeavyMetal_Food_March2020.pdf)
- Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSUs) (<https://www.pehsu.net/>)

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