

# Healthy Eating Habits for Infants and Babies

## Starting Healthy Eating Habits in the First Year of Life

### How early can parents start thinking about healthy eating habits?

Infancy and toddlerhood are important time periods to set the foundation for healthy eating, sleep, and activity patterns that can decrease risk of childhood overweight or obesity. A growing body of evidence suggests that the earlier infants and parents start implementing healthy eating habits including understanding age-appropriate portions and avoiding practices that introduce excess calories, the more likely the child will have healthy growth and healthy weight in each phase of development. So, it's really never too early to start!

### What foods and what feeding practices are recommended for infants in the 1st year of life?

It is always best to speak to your pediatrician or health care provider with detailed questions regarding the introduction of solids and general feeding practices as each infant's needs may differ. However, the table below can help guide parents around what foods to offer and during what developmental period to promote healthy eating habits early on.

#### Food for 1st year of life:

0-4 Months	4-6 Months	6-8 Months	8-12 Months
<b>0-4 Months</b> <b>Breast Milk or Infant Formula:</b> 8-12 feedings daily 2-4 ounces per feeding 20-32 ounces per day  <b>Dairy:</b> None  <b>Cereals &amp; Breads:</b> None  <b>Vegetables:</b> None  <b>Fruits:</b> None  <b>Meat and Protein:</b> None	<b>4-6 Months</b> <b>Breast Milk or Infant Formula:</b> 4-6 feedings daily 4-6 ounces per feeding 28-32 ounces per day  <b>Dairy:</b> None  <b>Cereals &amp; Breads:</b> Single grain infant cereal, 1-2 tablespoons mixed with breast milk or infant formula, feed by spoon. 1-2 feedings a day.  <b>Vegetables:</b> None  <b>Fruits:</b> None  <b>Meat and Protein:</b> None	<b>6-8 Months</b> <b>Breast Milk or Infant Formula:</b> 3-5 feedings daily 6-8 ounces per feeding 30-32 ounces per day  <b>Dairy:</b> None  <b>Cereals &amp; Breads:</b> Single grain infant cereal, 2-4 tablespoons mixed with breast milk or infant formula, feed by spoon. 2 feedings a day.  <b>Vegetables:</b> After cereal and meats are introduced, try plain strained or mashed vegetables, 2-3 TBSP a feeding. 1-2 feedings a day.  <b>Fruits:</b> Single ingredient baby fruits or mashed fruits, 2-3 TBSP a feeding. 1-2 feedings a day.  <b>Meat and Protein:</b> Plain baby or puree meats and egg yolks or soft finely chopped chicken, fish or lean meats, mashed beans. 1-2 TBSP a feeding. 1-2 feedings a day.	<b>8-12 Months</b> <b>Breast Milk or Infant Formula:</b> 3-5 feedings daily 6-8 ounces per feeding 30-32 ounces per day  <b>Dairy:</b> Cheese (1/2 ounce), Yogurt (1/2 cup), Cottage Cheese (2 TBSP), 1 feeding per day.  <b>Cereals &amp; Breads:</b> Single grain infant cereal (2-4 TBSP), bread (1/2 slice), Crackers (2), Pasta (3-4 TBSP), 2-3 feedings a day.  <b>Vegetables:</b> Plain strained or mashed vegetables, 3-4 TBSP a feeding. 2-3 feedings a day.  <b>Fruits:</b> Single ingredient mashed fruits or soft peeled fruit wedges (bananas, peaches, pears, orange), 3-4 TBSP a feeding. 2-3 feedings a day.  <b>Meat and Protein:</b> Plain baby or puree meats and egg yolks or soft finely chopped chicken, fish or lean meats, mashed beans. 3-4 TBSP a feeding. 2 feedings a day.

## What are other ways to encourage early eating habits from the start?

- Make meal time a fun and social event! Allowing your infant to explore new foods, textures and flavors is part of healthy development and sharing it with you is beneficial to both baby and parent. Whenever possible, help your child associate feeding with a social mealtime interaction. Avoid associating mealtime with TVs/screens or toys that could distract your infant from eating and enjoying the experiences of eating together.
- Use a baby spoon/baby utensil when introducing solids. This helps with motor development as well as promotes the time needed to feel full with a meal. Avoid putting cereal and foods in the baby bottle as it promotes the infant overeating and having less of a chance to feel full. For more information on hunger and fullness cues click [here](#).
- Avoid or limit use of pre-prepared baby foods with sugars and additives. Whenever possible, use plain foods (meats, fruits, vegetables) and mix them together yourself.
- Remember that portions offered in packages are often much larger than what is recommended for an age group. Pay attention to portions! It may be best to scoop out 1-2 TBSP of baby food from the jar and allow your infant to ask for more, instead of serving the full jar.
- It can take babies 10-15 times of trying a new food before he or she accepts it. Continue offering new foods to your baby to help develop lifelong healthy eating habits

## What foods should be avoided in the first year?

Some foods are known to cause nutritional risks for infants and should be avoided until the 1st birthday. Similarly, some foods can pose a risk for choking and should only be introduced once developmentally ready (e.g., presence of upper and lower teeth, ability to chew well).

- Cow's milk, goat's milk or soy milk
- Honey
- Peanut butter or other "sticky" foods
- Foods containing added sugars
- Hard foods that may cause choking (hot dogs, popcorn, raw fruits and vegetables such as apples, carrots)
- Fruit juice (even drinks that are labeled 100% juice have significant amounts of added sugars that are not recommended in this age group).

Your infant's first year is an incredibly exciting time where each stage of development is an opportunity to promote healthy eating patterns! Keeping these practices in mind can help you avoid some common challenges related to infant nutrition, growth and development. Be sure to ask your healthcare provider about your child's growth during your routine check-ups and be sure to keep visiting the Johns Hopkins All Children's Healthy Weight Initiative for more information.

## Schedule a Visit and Meet the Team

Contact us to schedule a visit and get to know our clinicians.



### Give us a call

Call [727-767-8917](tel:727-767-8917) to schedule an appointment to meet us in St. Petersburg.



### Meet our specialists

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## Healthy Weight Initiative for Pediatric Obesity

Healthy Weight Initiative for Pediatric Obesity | Healthy Steps Clinic | Meet Our Team

### St. Petersburg

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### Sarasota

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Sarasota, FL 34238

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