

# 6–12 months



## Parent Tips

- For the next six months, babies will learn through tasting, smelling and touching food. Making faces or spitting out new foods is normal.
- **Expect mealtime to be messy.**
- Set regular feeding times with your baby. Some days they will eat less than other days. Let them be the guide. Do not force your baby to eat.

## Feeding Advice

- Continue breastfeeding on demand.
- If you are breastfeeding or formula feeding, let your baby decide how much to drink.
- The amount of milk they drink will decrease as they eat more solid foods.
- Ask your child's doctor about Vitamin D supplementation.

### Introducing food

- Offer new foods like soft veggies when your child is most hungry. Offer new foods with familiar foods.
- Your child may like something different from you. Be sure to offer lots of different fruits and vegetables.
- Stay positive. Don't be surprised if you have to offer a new food several times.
- This is your chance to let baby explore with their hands, tongue and eyes.

### Self-feeding with finger foods\*

- Mealtimes: Offer new colors, flavors, textures and smells. Give small tastes.
- Enjoy family meals. Place your baby in a booster seat or high chair at the table. Let babies feed themselves as much as possible.
- Never bribe, reward or comfort your baby with food.
- They will let you know when they are done – tugging at their bib, turning their head or pushing away the plate or spoon.

### What should baby be drinking?

- Around 9 to 12 months, trade the bottle for a cup. By one year, offer all drinks in a cup.
- At one year, offer milk at meals and water in between meals. Juice decreases your baby's appetite. Juice is not necessary. If your doctor recommends it, give less than 3 ounces a day of 100% juice.
- Soft drinks, fruit punch, sports drinks or other sweetened drinks are not good for your baby.

## Activity Advice

- Enjoy watching your baby crawl, reach, play with toys or walk.
- Play simple games together, like hiding or rolling balls.
- Play using all five senses by dancing to music, smelling new things, looking at colors and hand or clapping games.
- TV, computers, tablets, video games and cell phones can take away from time to move and explore.
- Build their words, talk to them. Ask baby what they see, read to them and tell stories together.

## Sleep Advice

- Continue a calming sleep routine with low lights, a warm bath, and **reading** together.
- No eating or TV before bed.
- It is normal and best for babies at this age to sleep about 14 hours each day.

*\*Beware of choking hazards (ask your healthcare provider).*

## Play with a Purpose: 6–12 months

### This is a happy time for your baby!

- Babies laugh, screech, kick when they see you coming.

### Watching Your Baby

- Watch your baby study new things with all five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, feel).
- At first, your baby will point, screech, babble, and shake their head to show hunger or feeling full. Gradually they will use sounds, then words.
- Point out colors and count what's on the plate.
- Around 9 months they learn how to use their thumb and first finger to pick up small, soft food chunks, such as pieces of avocado, banana, pear, cheese or Cheerios.



### Fun at Mealtime

- Talk or sing when you sit with them. Ask questions and point. Wait to let baby make sounds. “Talk” back and forth.
- Put new and different foods and flavors on their finger or fist. Let the baby sit with you when you eat.
- Offer your baby lots of colors, textures, smells, and tastes. Let them squish, drop, splash, lick, and mix them up.

### Play with a Purpose

Every day, set aside some time for floor play:

- **Talk** – Say out loud what you see them doing, like “That’s a banana. Are you squishing it?” When they babble or make sounds, talk back to them.
- **Big muscles** (legs, back, arms) – Put things just out of reach to make them roll, scoot, crawl or pull up to get them.
- **Hands and fingers** – Give them toys they can grab that feel rough, smooth, soft, furry. Offer things that light up or make sound (flash light, rattle, bean bag, wrapping paper).

### Try This!

As you offer any new food, describe the food using all five senses. Say “Mmm, tasty,” then put a bite in your mouth and smile.

### What Comes Next?

- By 24 months, your child will learn to eat the same foods that your family does.
- Be aware of your baby’s habits and tastes – they will continue to change. Don’t get discouraged.
- Keep regular mealtimes, snack times, play times, nap times, reading times, and bed times. It will be easier for you and better for them.

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