

NGĀ KAI TŌTIKA MŌ TE HUNGA KŌHUNGAHUNGA

Eating for Healthy Babies and Toddlers

From birth to 2 years old



A baby needs enough food to grow, develop, sleep, and be happy.

Caring for a baby is very rewarding, although there is always a lot to do. Your baby depends on you for a healthy start in life.



These guidelines will help you choose healthy food for your baby and toddler.

- Breast milk is best.
- If you cannot breastfeed, use an infant formula until baby is 12 months old.
- Give babies and toddlers enough to drink.
- Start solids with one new food at a time.
- Change variety, texture and quantity as your baby grows.
- Healthy eating habits start early.

Breast Milk is Best

Successful breastfeeding is best for babies.

Breast milk is specially made for your baby:

- it's the perfect food for baby
- it changes with your baby's needs
- it helps protect your baby against infection
- it lowers the risk of allergies
- and it's cheap, safe, environmentally friendly and ready to use!

Young babies need to be fed often and on demand.

Baby's appetite, happiness, weight gain and lots of wet nappies tell you how much milk baby needs. If baby is hungry after feeding from one breast, then offer the other breast. After feeding on both breasts, begin the next feed on the breast used last.



You can express breast milk. It will keep refrigerated in a sterilised container for up to 48 hours. It can also be frozen for 3-4 months in a fridge/freezer or up to 6 months in a separate deep freeze. Remember to put the date on the container.

A breastfed baby's bowel motions are soft, a bright yellow colour and often very frequent, but each baby is different. Breastfed babies don't usually get constipated, even though some babies only have a bowel motion every few days.



Formula Feeding

For many reasons, some parents choose to use an infant formula. There are a lot of brands to choose from. Once you have found a formula that suits your baby it is best to keep to the same one.

- Always wash your hands before preparing bottle feeds. You must wash and sterilize all feeding equipment until baby is at least three months old (including any items used with breast milk). When baby is older, thorough washing is enough.

Ask your Plunket nurse or chemist for more information about sterilising bottles and teats.

- Make up the formula carefully using the instruction on the can. It shows the amount your baby needs each day. Use the scoop provided with each can and make sure the powder is a level scoop that is not packed down.
- In the first three months, use boiled, cooled water to make up formula (see also page 5).
- Formula can be heated by placing the bottle in a container of hot water.
- It is best not to put the bottle of formula in a microwave as it can easily overheat or heat unevenly. However if you choose to use a microwave, microwave formula in a sterilised jug, then pour into a sterilised bottle. Let it sit 2-3 minutes, shake it, then test the heat with a few drops on the inside of your wrist.
- Continue using breast milk or formula as a main milk until baby is a year old.
- There is no evidence that soy infant formula reduces the likelihood of allergies. Soy infant formula should only be used under the direction of a health professional.
- Condensed and evaporated milks should not be used for babies.
- Before feeding baby, always check the temperature of the formula by putting some on the inside of your wrist. It should just feel warm.
- If baby is hungry and demands more, give more formula at each feed or add an extra feed. Do not alter the strength.
- We recommend that you only prepare the amount needed for the baby's next feed, and that you prepare it as close as possible to feeding time.
- Bowel motions will be firmer and darker in colour than those of a breastfed baby.
- After 8-9 months baby can have small amounts of cow's milk used in cooking or as yoghurt, custard or cheese.
- After 12 months, the main milk for toddlers can be whole milk - full cream or homogenised.

If you need advice and support with breastfeeding or formula feeding ask for help from:

- Your family doctor and practice nurse
- Plunket nurse and Plunket-Karitane Family Centre
- Your midwife or a lactation consultant
- La Leche League (breastfeeding advice and support only)
- Community or private practice dietitian
- Parents Centre.

Babies and toddlers need enough to drink

Babies should get all of their drink as milk, either breastmilk or formula. Your baby or toddler may need extra breastfeeds, or extra water in a bottle or feeding cup:

- when the weather is very hot
- if baby or toddler has a temperature and is feverish
- if baby or toddler has any vomiting or has diarrhoea.

Continue to give breast milk or formula but see your doctor if your baby continues to be unwell for 24 hours.

- Healthy babies should generally have 6 or more very wet nappies a day.
- In the first 3 months, all water baby drinks should be boiled and cooled on the day it is used. Boil for 3 minutes on the stove top or until an automatic kettle switches off.
- In cities and towns you can use water from the tap after baby is 3 months old. If you are concerned about water quality continue to boil and cool water. Water from tanks or bore holes should still be boiled and cooled for babies and toddlers until they are about 18 months old.
- Drinks containing natural and added sugar such as fruit juice, cordials and fizzy drink can damage developing teeth and develop a taste for sweetened foods. If you are offering fruit juice, make sure it is very diluted - just enough to colour the water. Keep sweet drinks for treats. Tea, coffee and alcohol should never be given to babies and toddlers. They are stimulants which can make them restless.
- Babies should not be left with a bottle to suck on for a long time. Milk or fruit juice in a bottle will coat their teeth long after feeding is finished. This damages developing teeth and will make them decay.

Start solids with one new food at a time

It takes time for a baby's digestive system to fully develop.

When baby can hold up its head and starts to show signs of chewing it is probably ready for its first (weaning) foods. This is usually between 4-6 months, although the age will differ between babies. Introducing solids too early is not good for your baby. Discuss when to start foods with your child health nurse or doctor.

Choose a time when baby is most relaxed and happy to introduce a new food. Babies like the plain taste of milk, so first foods also need to be plain. Don't add extra salt or sugar to food you make for baby.

Give the milk feed first and offer solids as a 'top up'. Try 1 teaspoon first and gradually increase until baby is having about 3-4 teaspoons at a meal.

First foods need to be soft and smooth. Use a blender or push food through a fine sieve with a wooden spoon. You can add expressed breast milk, formula or water to make the food liquid enough for baby to swallow. Extra home-made foods can be frozen in ice cubes and used in the next 3-4 weeks.

Canned and bottled commercial baby foods have been specially made to meet the needs of your baby. Always follow the storage instructions on the bottle or can.

Hold baby while you feed or sit them in a baby high chair. Use a small teaspoon and put the food in the middle of their tongue.

First try plain, soft foods:

- baby rice or infant cereal
- pureed apple, pear, apricot, peach or ripe mashed banana
- pureed kumara, kamo kamo, pumpkin, potato, carrot, marrow or avocado.

(Honey should not be given to infants under 6 months.)

Try one new food every 4-5 days. If they don't like it the first time, leave it for a few days and try again with a small amount.

Give more variety as baby grows

Change the type of food offered, how much you give and the thickness of the mixture.

When baby can sit and is interested in finger foods (about 6-7 months):

introduce some finely minced (pureed) meat, chicken or egg yolk and include some vegetables - yams, taro, puha, courgettes, cauliflower, broccoli. Try toast fingers and rusks but only use low fibre products.

By 8-9 months when baby has good chewing and biting skills:

change the texture of the food with finely chopped meat, boneless fish or tofu and mashed rather than pureed vegetables. Include a wider range of cooked mashed vegetables such as silverbeet, spinach, peas, beans, tomatoes, cabbage and creamed corn.


Now that baby is 8-9 months you can offer solids before milk feeds.



Other suggestions:

- soft fresh fruit - a few orange segments or slices of kiwifruit are easy to manage
- white bread or plain crackers
- fine porridge
- yoghurt, custard, grated cheese.

Offer your baby small pieces of food to hold, such as a small sandwich or a finger of toast. Finger foods encourage them to try to feed themselves.



If you have strong family history of allergy, some foods should be left out until baby is 12 months old. These foods are cow's milk, cheese, yoghurt, ice-cream, fish and wheat cereal. If there is a strong family history of allergy, peanuts should not be introduced until the child is 3 years old. Discuss this with your doctor or child health nurse. They can arrange for you to see a dietitian if necessary.

When baby is a year old:

give them small amounts of the same food your family eats. Although they still need about 2 cups of milk a day, toddlers can try a lot of different foods:

- bread, crackers and breakfast cereals
- vegetables and fruit
- whole milk, full cream or homogenised, yoghurt and cheese
- chopped lean meat, chicken, seafood, whole egg, cooked dried peas, beans or lentils.

Babies and toddlers need small meals and snacks often. They have small stomachs and are using lots of energy.

Some healthy snacks are:

- a small sandwich
- plain cracker with cheese or vegemite/marmite
- small pieces of soft fresh fruit or vegetable (you can put pieces of hard fruit such as apple in a soft muslin cloth for them to suck on)
- a small cup of milk (toddlers)
- yoghurt
- home-made rusks (cut slices of bread into fingers and bake slowly in the oven. Store in an airtight jar.)

Some babies like to chew when they begin teething. Offer home-made rusks or buy teething biscuits or a teething ring.

Babies and toddlers can choke very easily. Any whole pieces of food can cause them to choke.

- Always make sure babies and toddlers sit down while they eat, and that someone is with them while they are eating.
- Do not give small hard foods such as whole nuts (especially those with skins) until children are at least 5 years old.
- Make sure your hands are clean when making and feeding baby's food.
- Throw out any uneaten baby food left on their plate.

Start healthy eating habits from an early age

How much food should I offer my baby?

All babies have different individual needs. Watch for signs of being full - some babies turn their head away. As baby becomes more active, you need to offer small amounts of food often.

My toddler seems to eat less than she did as a baby. Is that usual?

In their first year babies grow very quickly and they need a lot of food. They don't grow quite so quickly in the second year, so some days they may eat a bit less.



We use low fat milk. Is that OK for my toddler?

Toddlers should have whole milk until they are two years, then reduced fat milk can be introduced. Children under 5 should not be given non fat milk.

My child won't eat vegetables.

Don't worry - it's very common, especially as toddlers get older. Try offering raw vegetables or small pieces of fruit as an alternative.

Is it true that toddlers should not have wholegrain bread?

Babies and toddlers get all the fibre they need from vegetables, fruit and baby cereals. White bread is better for a baby's young digestive system but by about 15 months try fine soft wholemeal breads.

Should baby have extra vitamins?

Babies and toddlers can get all the vitamins they need from food. Offer vegetables and fruit often. Extra vitamins are not recommended.

Can my baby have vegetables cooked for the family dinner?

Babies and toddlers do not need salt in their food. If you use salt when you cook the family dinner, it will be best to cook the baby's vegetables separately.

My baby seems to like sweet foods best.

Healthy habits begin early and we can encourage children to like fresh plain foods. Offer water instead of sweet drinks and don't add extra sugar or honey to fruit or breakfast cereals.

Why does my toddler need to eat iron-rich foods?

Iron is especially important to keep blood and brain cells healthy. Iron helps children learn. Lean meat, chicken and fish contain lots of iron, and vegetables and fruit help it to be well absorbed. Don't give tea as it contains substances which stop iron from being absorbed. Give toddlers small meals often, using lots of different foods. Two cups of milk a day is plenty for toddlers.

Other Ministry of Health books and fact sheets available from your local public health service are:

Eating for Healthy Pregnant Women (Code 6002)

Eating for Healthy Breastfeeding Women
(Code 6003)

Starting Solids (Code 6014)

Breastfeeding - You can do it (Code 9015)

Soy-based Infant Formula (Code 9060)



Meal ideas for babies 8-9 months

Breakfast

Porridge with breast milk or formula **or** stewed apple with cereal **or** yoghurt with soft fruit **or** white bread or toast with a little butter or margarine and mashed banana **or** serving of commercial baby food.

Lunch

Cut up finger food - bread triangles, grated cheese, small pieces soft fruit, soft pasta shapes **or** meat, chicken or cheese with potato **or** grilled cheese on toast fingers **or** serving of commercial baby food.

Dinner

Minced beef, lamb or chicken **with** mashed kumara, potato, pumpkin, taro or yam **or with** mushy rice and mashed vegetables **or** serving of commercial baby food.

Offer milk (breast or formula) and snacks in between meals

Meal ideas for toddlers about 15-18 months

Breakfast

Breakfast cereal and milk **or** 1/2 banana, sliced into fruit yoghurt **or** wholemeal toast with a little butter or margarine and spread ie. jam, vegemite or marmite.

Lunch

Sandwich quarters with luncheon sausage or mashed egg or cheese slice **or** baked beans on toast **or** pasta/noodle dish, eg, macaroni cheese **or** scrambled egg on toast **and** small piece fruit **and** a glass of milk.

Dinner

Cut up lean meat or chicken or sliced sausage **with** mashed potato, kumara or taro; rice or pasta **and** sliced or grated lightly cooked vegetable **and** dessert if desired, eg, fruit and custard, yoghurt.

For more information

The doctor or nurse who sees your baby:

family doctor and practice nurse
well child nurse
midwife
child health nurse at community clinic or Tipu Ora
paediatrician
lactation consultant

Other groups in the community:

La Leche League
Marae-based health services,
Tipu Ora, ngā ūkaipō
Plunket-Karitane Family Centres
Kōhanga Reo

Parents Centres NZ Inc
Multiple Birth Association

Community health workers

community health services or your local public health service
dietitian in community or private practice
Māori or Pacific Island health workers

You can also get telephone help from:

Healthline freephone 0800 611 116

