

Introducing solid foods – a roadmap

0-6 months

- Until they are 6 months old, babies should only have breastmilk or formula milk.
- Breastfed babies should be given vitamin D supplements.
- A baby's digestive system isn't mature enough to handle nutrients in foods until around 6 months.

Around 6 months

Babies are ready for solid foods when:

- They can stay sitting and supporting their own head.
- They can coordinate hands, eyes and mouth.
- They can swallow their food.
- Start off with slightly bitter pureed vegetables (like broccoli) before moving onto sweeter ones (like carrot).
- Many babies can handle a range of blended and mashed foods – go at a pace to suit them.
- Food is complementary to breastmilk or formula until they are at least 12 months old.
- Water can be offered as a drink, but cow's milk should never be given as a drink until 12 months.

Around 7-12 months

- Around 7 months, babies should be offered three meals a day, alongside breastmilk or formula.
- As babies become more confident at eating, you can give them food with lumps in.
- Babies have a heightened gag reflex, they will gag and spit out food as they work out how to move lumps around their mouths.
- Babies will naturally reduce the amount of breastmilk they drink as they eat more food. If they are formula fed, gradually reduce the amount of formula milk you give them.



How to cut food for babies

6 to 9 months:

Babies are developing their pincer grasp. Cut food into long, thin strips or wedges to make it easy for them to hold and nibble. Try cooked vegetables, soft fruits and well-cooked pasta.

9 to 12 months:

Babies are getting better at holding things, so introduce bite-sized pieces. This helps them practise chewing. Foods like soft fruits, cheese and well-cooked meat can be cut into pea sized cubes.

Over 12 months:

Older babies and toddlers can handle a variety of textures. Be sure to cut food into pieces that are appropriate for the child's mouth and throat size, making sure they are easy to chew.

Remember:

- Always supervise babies and toddlers while they are eating.
- Avoid choking by cutting food into the right sizes.
- Introduce a variety of textures and flavours.
- Pay attention to what the child likes and doesn't like.

