

# let's eat!

**Yum!**

Your  
Guide to  
Solid Foods

**Time  
To Play**  
Fun Games  
With Your  
Baby

**“It Worked  
For Me!”**  
Feeding Tips  
From Moms



WIC for a Healthier America

Your baby will go through several stages that will help you know what to feed him. Here are the stages, and where you can find them:

**Sitting With Some Help**  
(around 6 months) **Page 4**

**Sitting Without Help**  
(6 to 8 months) **Page 6**

**Crawling**  
(8 to 10 months) **Page 8**

**Learning to Walk**  
(10 to 12 months) **Page 10**



## Let's Eat!

It's hard to believe how fast babies grow. Pretty soon your little one will be ready for baby foods. You probably have lots of questions. When does he start? What foods do I give him? How much will he eat? Answers to these and other feeding questions can be found in this magazine. So get ready for this exciting new stage. Your baby will be more involved in family mealtime, and you will enjoy watching him learn to try new foods. Happy eating!

## When is My Baby Ready for Solid Foods?

Your baby is ready to try solid foods when he can do **all** of these things and is **around 6 months old**:

- ✓ He can sit up with some help.
- ✓ He can hold his head steady.
- ✓ He puts his fingers or toys in his mouth.
- ✓ He opens his mouth to show he wants food.
- ✓ When you try feeding him baby food, he can close his lips around the spoon and swallow food.

If your baby cannot do **all** of these things, it is best to wait. If your baby was born early, or if there is a history of food allergies in your family, talk to your doctor or WIC counselor about the best time to introduce baby foods.

# The Importance of Breastfeeding

When your baby is ready for solid foods, it's important to keep breastfeeding him until at least his first birthday. Here's why:

**1** Your baby needs the nutrition in breast milk. In fact, breast milk changes over time to provide just the right balance of nutrients for your child as he grows.

**2** Your baby will not eat a lot of solid foods at first. To start, he will be eating only small amounts to discover new tastes and textures. He will also be learning how to chew and swallow. He will need breast milk to meet his nutritional needs. As he gets used to eating more baby foods, he will gradually breastfeed less.

**3** Breastfeeding helps you stay connected with your baby. It's hard to replace the feelings of closeness and quiet time together that come with breastfeeding.

*If you feed your baby formula, continue to do so when your baby is ready for solid foods. As he eats more baby foods, he will gradually drink less formula.*



## Baby Foods and Sleep

**I've heard from friends that eating solid foods will help my baby sleep longer at night. Is this true?**

Not really. Your baby may wake up at night because he just isn't ready to start sleeping longer. This is normal. The only thing that will help him sleep longer is getting older. You may also have heard that feeding cereal in a bottle will help your baby sleep through the night. This is not true, and it is not safe. Putting food in a bottle can cause choking and overfeeding. Feed your baby only breast milk or formula until he is ready for solid foods. (See "When is My Baby Ready for Solid Foods?" on page 2.)

## Your Baby's **First Solid Foods**

Once your baby can do all of the things listed on page 2, she's ready to try solid foods! Here's what you need to know about the very first feeding.



### What do I feed my baby?

Choose a food high in iron, like fortified baby cereal or well-pureed meat (very smooth meat). To prepare cereal, follow the package directions. You can mix in breast milk or formula until the texture is right for your baby. Use a blender or grinder to puree cooked meat. Or serve pureed or strained baby food meat from a jar.



### How do I feed my baby?

Sit your baby in a highchair or on your lap. Put a little food on a baby spoon, and hold it near baby's mouth. If she opens her mouth, gently put the spoon in her mouth. The food may come back out. That's okay. She needs to practice eating from a spoon. Always wait until she's done with each bite before you feed her more. If your baby cries or turns away when you offer her solid foods, do not force her to eat. She is not ready. It's okay. Try again in a week.



### How much do I feed my baby?

It's more important for your baby to enjoy mealtimes than to eat a certain amount. If she is interested in eating, try starting with just 1 or 2 teaspoons of food. Look for signs that your baby is hungry or full so you know whether to keep feeding or to stop. When she is hungry, she will open her mouth, move her head toward the spoon, or try to grab the spoon. When she is full, she will turn her head away, fuss, or spit out her food. Meals are a relaxing time for your baby to explore. This will help her develop good eating habits.



### MOM TALK



**"My baby was watching me eat and pulling on my sleeve, so I knew she was interested in solid foods. When I fed her her first baby food, she seemed to enjoy it so much! It was exciting to think about her future love of food."**

—Angie, WIC mom, New York



## What **Not** to Feed Your Baby

Do Not Give These Foods to Your Baby	Why
Cow's milk	Your baby can't digest it yet.
Egg whites	They may cause allergic reactions.
Honey	It can cause serious illness.
Hot dogs, nuts, seeds, popcorn, whole grapes, dried fruit, raw hard vegetables, peanut butter, candy	They can cause choking.
If you have a family history of allergies, there may be more foods you want to avoid. Check with your doctor or clinic.	

## What's Next

After your baby has tried her first solid food, watch for any reaction over the next few days. These could be a rash, gas, diarrhea, vomiting, or trouble breathing. If she has a reaction, stop feeding that food and tell your doctor. Otherwise, continue with that food and add another new food. Ask your WIC counselor how long to wait before giving the next new food. Keep watching for a reaction with each new food. Pretty soon, your baby will be eating lots of different foods!

## New Foods to Try Now

At around 6 months, your baby may be ready to eat smooth food that has been strained or pureed. Here are some examples:



Pureed vegetables, like carrots



Well-pureed meat, like turkey



Rice, oat, or barley cereal



Pureed fruits, like unsweetened applesauce

# Sitting Without Help

(6 to 8 months)

In the months ahead, your baby will go from sitting on his own to learning to walk. As he grows, give him foods with different tastes and textures. This way he can learn to like many foods. All babies progress at their own pace. Be sure your child can chew and swallow smooth and softer foods before moving on to chunkier or firmer foods.



## 5 Tips for Serving Baby Food

Whether you buy baby food or make your own, remember these important tips.

- 1 Feed baby from a bowl, not from the jar or container.** Germs from his mouth can spoil the food. Throw out any food left in the bowl when baby's done.
- 2 Store the opened jar or container in the refrigerator.** If your baby does not eat the food in two days, throw it out.
- 3 Keep foods plain.** Your baby does not need salt, spices, sugar, butter, or other flavors.
- 4 Use a spoon.** It's important for your baby to learn to eat from a spoon. While feeding him, let him hold a spoon too so he can get used to it. He may try to feed himself.
- 5 Don't put baby food in a bottle.** Also stay away from infant feeders like a mesh bag or a syringe-type feeder.

## New Foods to Try Now

By about 7 or 8 months, your baby may be ready to try mashed foods in addition to what he is already eating. Use the back of a fork to mash foods well. Here are some foods he may like to try:



Mashed soft-cooked vegetables, like sweet potatoes



Mashed soft fruits, like bananas



Mashed soft-cooked noodles or rice



Mashed soft-cooked beans



**FUN  
QUIZ!**

## Starting a Cup

Take this quiz to find out more about giving your baby a cup. Answers are below.

### 1. When is your baby ready to start learning to use a cup?

- A. When he can sit up on his own.
- B. When he can hold his head steady for long periods of time.
- C. When he can put his lower lip around the mouth of a cup.
- D. When he can do all of the above.

### 2. Why is it important for your baby to learn to use a cup?

- A. Using a bottle too long can cause tooth decay.
- B. Using a bottle too long can make baby gain too much weight.
- C. Using a bottle too long can lead to ear infections.
- D. All of the above.

### 3. What can your baby drink from a cup?

- A. Breast milk
- B. Formula
- C. Water
- D. Any of the above

## ANSWERS

- 1 – D. **At first, your baby will need help learning to use a cup.** He will spill. Be patient and let him practice. He will learn soon.
- 2 – D. **Let your baby gradually use a cup more and more.** It is best for him to stop using a bottle around his first birthday.
- 3 – D. **Start with small amounts of liquid in a cup.** You can serve more as your baby gets used to drinking from a cup.



## Fruit Juice

### Now that my baby is eating fruit, can he drink fruit juice?

Babies don't need juice or other sweetened drinks. These have a lot of sugar and not many nutrients. Plus, they can leave your baby too full for healthier foods. It's best to give your baby mashed fruit. If you do serve him juice, put it in a cup and give him no more than 2 ounces a day.

## WIC Counselor TIP

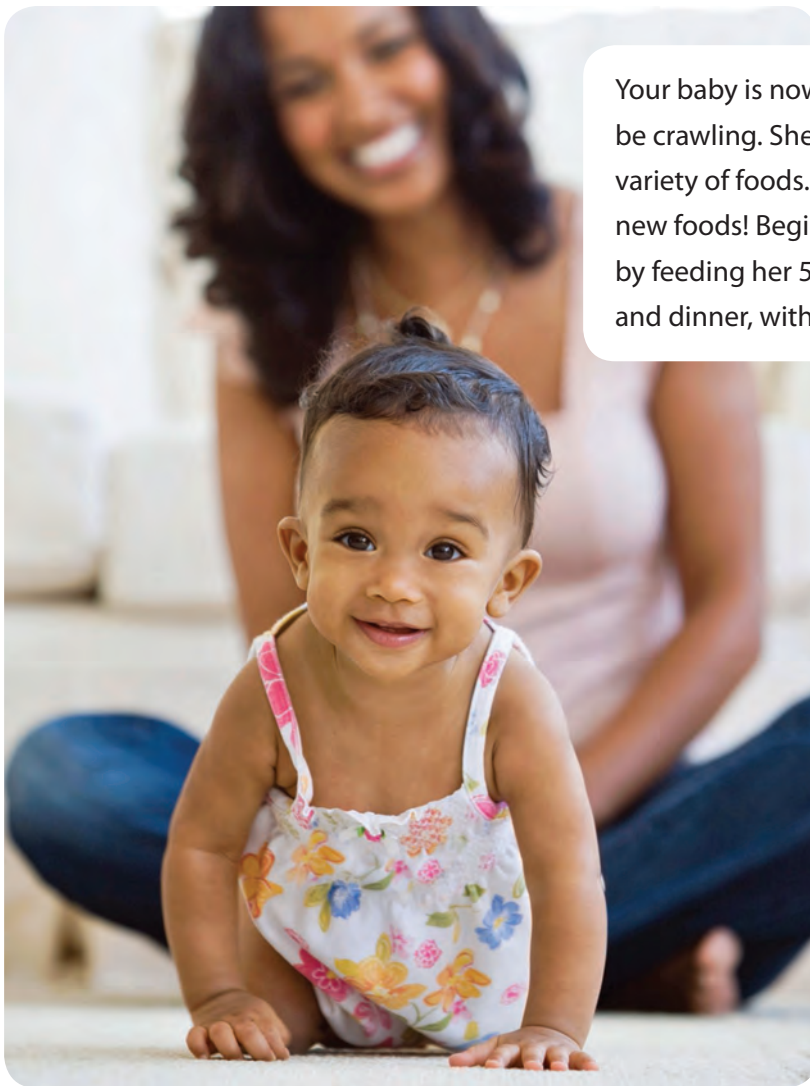
“Adding pureed baby food from the store to your own home-cooked mashed food can make it easier for your baby to move from pureed to mashed food. It will also stretch your budget since you can get baby foods from WIC.”

—Amy Limprasertkul, WIC counselor, Buffalo, New York



# Crawling

(8 to 10 months)



Your baby is now 8 to 10 months old and she may be crawling. She is probably ready for a wider variety of foods. You can help her have fun trying new foods! Begin to follow a regular eating pattern by feeding her 5 or 6 times a day: breakfast, lunch, and dinner, with snacks in between.



## Cow's Milk

### Can my baby drink cow's milk?

Not yet. Your baby can't digest cow's milk until she is around one year old. She needs to breastfeed or drink formula for the first year. She can start to eat dairy foods like yogurt and cheese between 8 and 10 months because they are easier to digest than cow's milk.

## New Foods to Try Now

Your baby is already eating pureed and mashed foods. She may also be ready for chopped soft foods. Just be sure to cut up everything into small pieces. Here are examples of foods she may like to try:



Chopped soft-cooked vegetables, like carrots



Chopped cooked egg yolk (no egg whites)



Chopped soft peeled fruits, like ripe papaya



Chopped tofu



Plain yogurt mixed with fruit



## Look What I Can Do!

At around 9 months, your baby will start using her thumb and fingers to pick up small things. She can start learning how to feed herself! Give her some finger foods so she can practice. Try small pieces of soft fruits or soft-cooked vegetables, small pieces of dry cereal, and small pieces of dry toast. It's important to always have your baby sit down when she is eating, and stay near her in case she starts choking.



### WIC Counselor TIP

**“The best part of the day for a lot of families is when they eat together. It’s fun to see the baby watch and listen at mealtimes. You just know he is learning so much!”**

**—Maryann Miernicki, WIC Nutritionist, San Diego, CA**

## On the Menu

Wondering what a baby might eat in a typical day? Here’s a sample menu for an 8- to 10-month-old. This menu includes finger foods, so baby can practice and enjoy feeding herself. Remember: Every baby is different, so your child may eat more or less than these amounts.

Breakfast	baby cereal mixed with breast milk or formula, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	applesauce, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 4 to 6 ounces of formula
Mid-Morning	2 unsalted crackers, in small pieces
	small pieces of cheese, 1 tablespoon
	baby food vegetables, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 5 to 6 ounces of formula
Lunch	baby food chicken, 1 to 3 tablespoons
	chopped soft-cooked green beans, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	½ whole-wheat tortilla, in small pieces
	breast milk or 3 to 4 ounces of formula
Mid-Afternoon	baby cereal mixed with breast milk or formula, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	chopped banana, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 4 to 6 ounces of formula
Dinner	chopped tofu, 1 to 2 tablespoons
	chopped cooked noodles, 2 tablespoons
	chopped soft-cooked broccoli, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 3 to 4 ounces of formula
Before Bed	baby food fruit, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 5 to 6 ounces of formula

# Learning to Walk

(10 to 12 months)

Now that your baby is almost 1, he is eating many different foods. He is better at using a cup, spoon, and bowl. He also enjoys your company at family mealtimes. By his first birthday, he can eat almost everything you can, as long as it is bite-sized and soft enough to chew.

## MOM TALK



**“One of our new family favorites is spaghetti night. We use whole-wheat pasta and we make our own sauce. My baby loves playing with the spaghetti. Sometimes it even makes it into his mouth!”**

**—Michelle, WIC mom, Arizona**



## New Foods to Try Now

In addition to everything your baby is already eating, he may be ready for small pieces of your family's foods. Start with soft foods at first, and then move on to firmer textures when he's ready. Some foods he may like:



Small pieces of soft peeled fruits, like melon



Small pieces of cooked meat, like ground beef



Small pieces of soft-cooked vegetables, like zucchini



Small bites of pasta or noodle dishes



Small pieces of grilled cheese sandwich



Finger foods like dry cereal or crackers

Turn the page  
for **games to play**  
with your baby!



## Let Him Make a Mess!

As your baby grows, he will enjoy feeding himself more and more. But be prepared: It can get messy! That's okay. He needs to explore different foods and learn how to eat. You may want to put newspapers or a plastic tablecloth under your baby's highchair. Wash your baby's hands and face before and after meals.

## My Baby's Tastes

"When Alex started eating baby food, he was a good eater. But around the time he turned 1, he got picky. He did not try new foods. I'm so glad I asked my WIC counselor about this. She told me that it can take 10 times or more before a baby accepts something new. She also said that Alex may want to feed himself. So I put small pieces of new foods on his highchair tray and let him play with them and smell them. After a while, he tried the new foods and liked most of them! Now he's happy at mealtime and eating different things."

—Julia, WIC mom, Wisconsin

## On the Menu

Wondering what your baby might eat in a typical day? Here's a sample menu for a 10- to 12-month-old. Every baby is different, so your child may eat more or less than these amounts. Remember: As your baby gets older, he will be drinking more from a cup. If he drinks formula, put it in a cup at mealtimes so he can practice. If he breastfeeds, give him a little water in a cup at mealtimes.

Breakfast	baby cereal mixed with breast milk or formula, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	peeled banana, 3 to 4 small slices
	breast milk or 3 to 4 ounces of formula
Mid-Morning	baby food fruit, 2 to 4 tablespoons, spread on ½ slice toasted bread
	breast milk or 5 to 7 ounces of formula
Lunch	cooked ground beef pieces, 1 tablespoon
	cooked rice, 2 tablespoons, mixed with baby food vegetables, 2 tablespoons
	small soft-cooked zucchini pieces, 3 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 3 to 4 ounces of formula
Mid-Afternoon	dry cereal, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	peeled melon, 3 to 4 small pieces
	breast milk or 5 to 6 ounces of formula
Dinner	macaroni and cheese, 3 tablespoons
	small cooked chicken pieces, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	baby food vegetables, 3 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 3 to 4 ounces of formula
Before Bed	small soft-cooked carrot pieces, 2 to 4 tablespoons
	breast milk or 5 to 7 ounces of formula

# Time to Play!

From about 6 to 12 months, your baby will go from sitting with help to learning how to walk. With each stage, she gets better at eating and she tries more foods. She also gets stronger and more active. Try out her new skills with these simple and fun games.



## Sitting With Some Help (around 6 months)

### Floor Fun

**Benefit:** Helps make your baby's head, neck, and upper body muscles stronger.

- Place your baby on his tummy on the floor. Lie in front of him. Raise and lower your head so your baby moves his head up and down to watch you.
- Next, slowly move a toy away from him so he rolls or crawls towards it.
- Then use more toys to lead your baby in different directions.
- Try to put baby on his tummy for a few minutes every day.



## Sitting Without Help (6 to 8 months)

### Tower Power

**Benefit:** Baby will learn that she can make things happen.

- Find empty boxes of different sizes (not too big!) and tape them closed.
- Help your baby make a tower of boxes. Explain what you're doing. ("Let's put the small box on top of the big box.")
- Then help your baby knock it over or pull a box from the middle.
- Build another tower and find a new way to knock it down.



## Crawling (8 to 10 months)

### Lost and Found

**Benefit:** Baby will learn that things are still there even when he can't see them.

- Hide a small toy under a plastic cup or a blanket.
- Help your baby knock over the cup or pull off the blanket to find the hidden toy.
- Explain what he has found. ("You just found a soft yellow ball!")
- Find more things to hide for your baby to discover.



## Learning to Walk (10 to 12 months)

### Amazing Maze

**Benefit:** Helps baby practice crawling or walking and gain self-confidence.

- Make a course with pillows, couch cushions, upside-down laundry baskets, and stuffed animals.
- Lead your baby through the maze. Then have her go first, while you chase her.
- Tell her where you're going as you both move. ("Let's go around this pillow!" "I'm coming after you!")



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Public Health • Nutrition Services Branch  
www.ncdhhs.gov • www.nutritionnc.com

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.