



**starting to  
spoonfeed  
your baby**

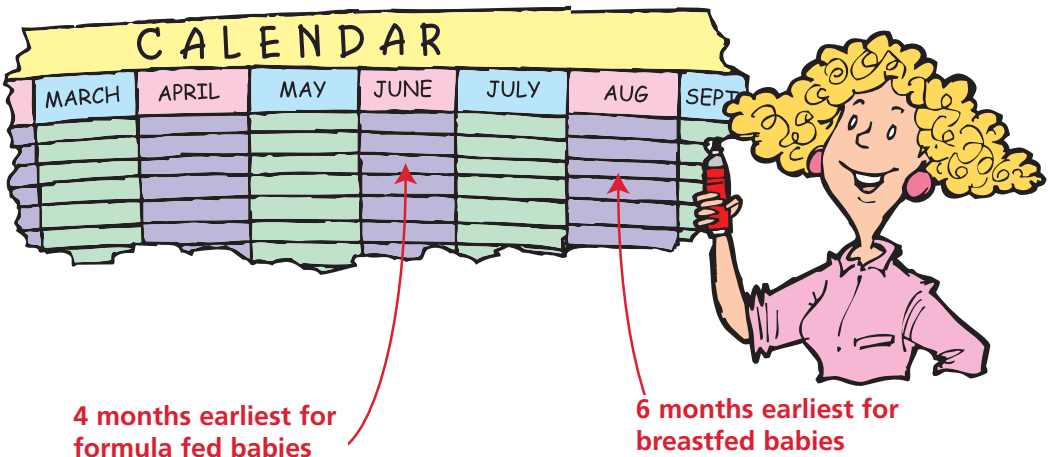
# When to start spoonfeeds

This booklet will give you practical tips and suggestions for starting your baby on spoonfeeds. Whether you are breastfeeding or formula feeding you will find the information useful. For ease of reading everywhere we refer to your baby we use the term 'he'.

Breastmilk provides all the nourishment your baby needs up until 6 months. We recommend that breastfeeding should continue together with a healthy, balanced diet for up to two years or longer, if you wish. Formula milk is the next best substitute for breast milk.

Spoonfeeds should be introduced to your baby's diet at 6 months if you have exclusively breastfed your baby, or sometime between 4 - 6 months if your baby has been fed formula milk. Exclusive breastfeeding means that your baby has been given only breast milk with no other foods or fluids. Giving your baby spoonfeeds before 17-18 weeks can reduce your baby's intake of milk so he may not get enough protein and energy. Early spoonfeeds can also increase the risk of tummy problems, allergy and kidney problems.

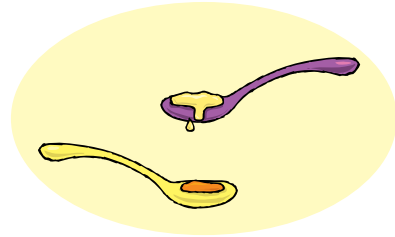
Remember your baby can decide for himself how much food he needs.



# Baby's first foods

First foods should be of a soft runny consistency, without lumps.

- Introduce one new food at a time.
- Suitable first foods: baby rice, fruit and vegetable purées.
- Allow your baby to get used to each new food before starting another.
- Start with one teaspoon per day, increasing gradually to 2-3 teaspoons per day.



## Purées

A purée is thick pulp made by blending the fruit or vegetables in a liquidizer or rubbing them through a sieve.

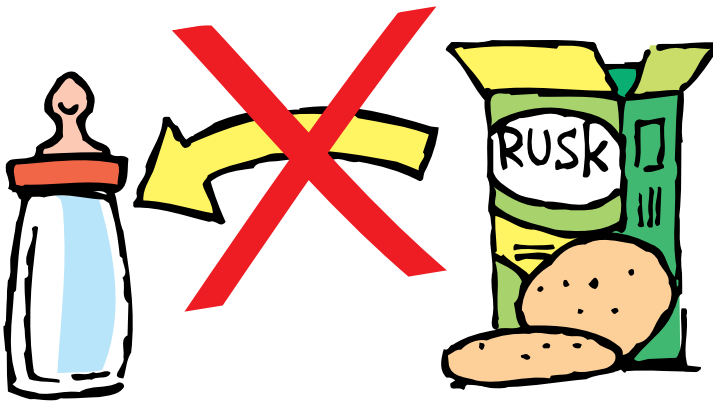
Add breastmilk, formula milk, cooled boiled water or water from cooking vegetables to the purée to get the right consistency.

# How to start

- Ensure you have plenty of time.
- Choose a time when your baby is not too hungry.
- The best way for a baby to learn to take foods is from a spoon. Introduce the spoon to your baby's mouth gradually so that he can suck the food from it.
- Give food first and then follow with breastmilk or formula milk.



**Never put rusks, cereals or other foods into the bottle. This makes the feed too concentrated and may be harmful to baby.**



# Drinks for your baby

As your baby takes more spoonfeeds, he will need less breast or formula milk. If your baby is full on milk feeds, he may not want spoonfeeds.

- **Breastfed babies should be offered only breastmilk up to 6 months.**
- **For formula fed babies, formula milk or cooled boiled water** should be the only drinks given up to 4 months.
- **Fruit juices** should not be given in place of milk, from a bottle or at bedtime. Small amounts of well-diluted, unsweetened fruit juice (dilute 1 measure of pure juice to 4 or 5 measures of cooled boiled water) should only be given from a cup, at mealtimes, or with snacks from 6 months onwards.
- **Tea, fruit drinks** and **fizzy** drinks are unsuitable drinks for babies and children.



Your baby needs to learn how to drink from a beaker or cup, rather than drinking from a bottle. Use a beaker with two handles and no lid. Start encouraging your baby to drink from a beaker from 6 months, to encourage your baby to learn how to swallow. **By one year, your baby should only be drinking from a beaker.** Bottles should not be taken to bed.



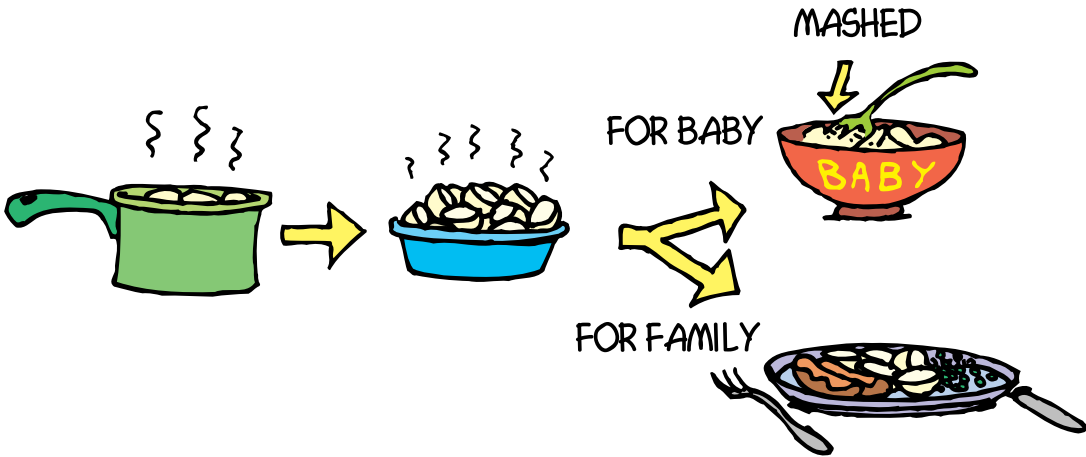
## Remember

Cow's milk is not suitable as a main drink for children under 1 year. Small quantities to moisten your baby's spoonfeeds may be gradually introduced from 6 months.



# Preparing food for your baby

By preparing homemade foods you know exactly what your baby is eating. It is good for your baby to become used to eating homemade foods from an early age. Homemade meals are often cheaper than jars of baby food.



**When preparing meals for the rest of the family, remove your baby's portion before adding seasoning (salt, pepper). Make up a supply of baby foods at the one time and freeze them. Small portions can be frozen in ice cube trays. Do not add salt to baby's food.**

## To soften your baby's food you can use

- Breastmilk or Formula milk
- Vegetable water
- Cooled boiled water
- Cow's Milk after 6 months

## Do not use

- Stock cubes, gravy and packets or jars of sauce, as these contain a lot of salt

# Ready-made Foods

- These can be expensive;
- Useful when travelling or eating away from home;
- Choose savoury meals rather than sweetened desserts and puddings which are high in sugar;
- Try not to rely on jars and packets of shop bought foods every day.



Babies have to learn to swallow food. Your baby may seem to be spitting the food out. This does not mean he does not like it, he is just getting used to spoonfeeding. Offer your baby food that is smooth, soft and lump-free. Remember, if your baby is still taking full milk feeds, he may reject spoonfeeds as he is full.

# Stage 1 - Introducing spoonfeeds

## Suitable Foods

Puréed meat, peas and beans  
Puréed fruit and vegetables  
Puréed potato  
Gluten-free cereals such as baby rice

## Consistency

Puréed and of a soft consistency without lumps. Start with a thin purée and make thicker as baby learns to take food from a spoon.

## Suitable Drinks

Breastmilk  
Formula milk  
Cool boiled water (if necessary)

## Do not give

Gluten-containing foods such as bread, pasta, wheat, rye, oats, barley and breakfast cereals.  
Cow's milk  
Yogurts, fromage frais, cheese  
Whole nuts and peanut-containing products  
Eggs

**Note:** Babies' appetites can vary. Start with 1-2 teaspoons of food at meals and increase gradually. Remember to include puréed meat or chicken in your baby's diet.

## Suitable First Foods:



# Foods not to use

- Foods that contain gluten (such as wheat, oats, rye or barley) before 6 months of age.
- Do not give eggs before 6 months of age.
- Do not add salt or sugar to your baby's food.
- Do not give **whole** nuts until your child is at least **5 years old** - because of the danger of choking.

## Peanuts

Children with a family history of asthma, eczema, hay fever or food allergy should avoid peanut and products containing peanuts until the age of 3 years. It is recommended that breastfeeding mothers avoid peanuts while breastfeeding.

## Gluten

Gluten is a protein found in cereals such as wheat, oats, rye and barley. Some babies may develop an allergy to gluten if given it before 6 months of age.

You can offer your baby thicker puréed foods by increasing the amount of food you give and adding less liquid.

# Stage 2 - Over 6 months

(Babies who start spoonfeeds at 6 months of age should be able to move quickly from Stage 1 puréed foods to mashed, lumpy and finger foods)

## Suitable Foods

Foods as in Stage 1, but you can now include:  
Well cooked eggs  
Other breakfast cereals (containing gluten)  
Bread and pasta  
Cheese (pasteurised) such as grated Cheddar, yogurt  
Pasteurised cow's milk can be used in small amounts in foods

## Consistency

Minced or mashed to a less fine texture

## Suitable Drinks

Continue to give breastmilk or formula milk  
Cool boiled water (if necessary)  
Well-diluted, unsweetened, pure fruit juice at mealtimes. Dilute 1 measure of pure juice to 4 or 5 measures of cooled, boiled water

## Do not give

Whole nuts and products containing peanuts  
Cheese made with raw milk (Unpasteurised)  
Undercooked Eggs



# TIPS

**Encourage chewing by giving lumpier foods at mealtimes. Your baby will also enjoy finger food for chewing practice! Try slices of peeled apples, banana, fingers of toast or bread, sticks of carrots, cheese cubes. Do not leave your baby alone, in case of choking.**

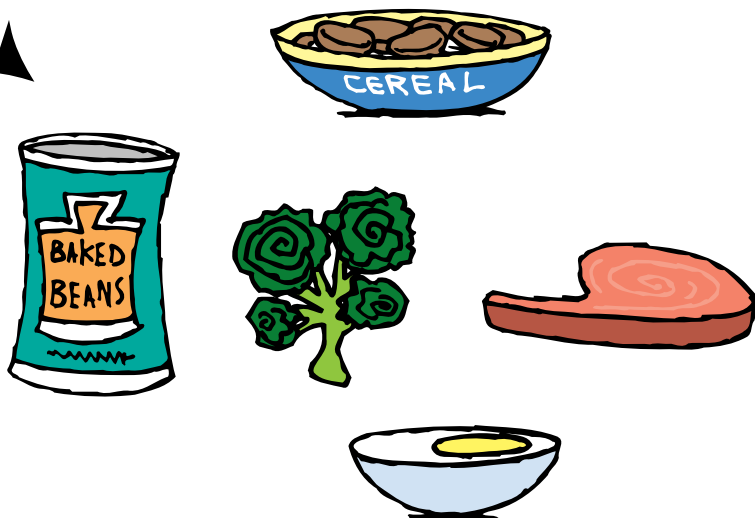


- It is not a good idea to offer smooth purées for too long, add a little mashed or grated food into his usual purées.
- Try giving some drinks such as breastmilk, formula or water, from a lidless beaker or cup, from 6 months.
- Introduce yogurt and fromage frais.
- At some meals, well-diluted unsweetened, pure fruit juice can be given.
- Introduce variety with new foods.

## Note on iron:

Babies are born with stores of iron. At around 6 months, these stores begin to run out so it is important to ensure your baby gets enough iron for healthy growth and development. Give him iron-rich foods ( such as lean meat, cereals, beans and green vegetables) regularly.

### Iron Rich Foods:



Let your baby feed himself, with your help, even if it means messy fingers. Mealtimes are a time of learning and should be fun. Never leave your baby alone when he is eating.

# Stage 3 – 9 to 12 months

## Suitable Foods

Increase the variety of foods in your baby's diet. Most family foods are now suitable.

## Consistency

Chunky mashed texture and food chopped into bite-sized pieces. Serve some finger foods that your baby can pick up and feed himself.

## Suitable Drinks

Continue to give breastmilk or formula milk  
Cool boiled water (if necessary)  
Well-diluted unsweetened pure fruit juice at mealtimes.

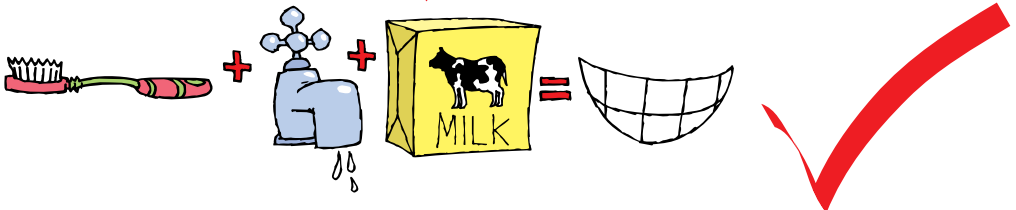
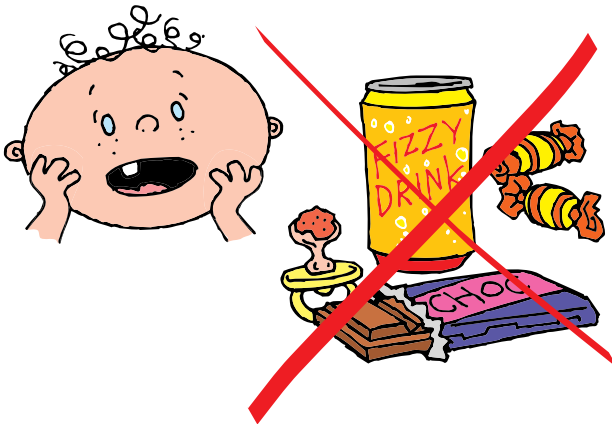
## Do not give

Whole nuts and products containing peanuts.  
Unpasteurised cheese  
Undercooked Eggs

# TIPS

## Your baby's teeth:

- Milk and water (cooled boiled water, up to 1 year) are the most tooth-friendly drinks.
- Sugary snacks such as sweet biscuits, chocolate or sweets will damage your baby's teeth.
- Fruit juices should be unsweetened and well diluted. Dilute 1 measure of pure juice in 4 or 5 measures of water. Give in small amounts, from a cup, at mealtimes only.
- Teeth should be cleaned gently with a soft toothbrush and water.
- Fluoride toothpaste is not suitable for children under 2 years of age. After 2, a pea-sized amount of toothpaste can be used.



# From one year onwards

- When your baby is one year old, he should be able to eat most of the food eaten by the rest of the family.
- Encourage a wide variety of foods, tastes and textures.
- Regular small meals are advised. Some children may need snacks in between such as yogurts, fruit or bread.



- Encourage your child to have around one pint of whole cow's milk, per day. Drinking more than this can affect his appetite for food.
- Low-fat milk should not be given to children under 2 years. Skimmed milk should not be given before 5 years.
- At this stage, all drinks should be from a feeding cup rather than from a bottle.
- Do not give sweets, chocolate and other sugary foods or drinks.
- Do not offer whole nuts until your child is at least 5 years old, because of the danger of choking.
- Make meals a social occasion for all the family.
- Set a good example for your baby by eating healthy meals.

## Variety is important



# Questions answered

## What should I do if my baby will not eat?

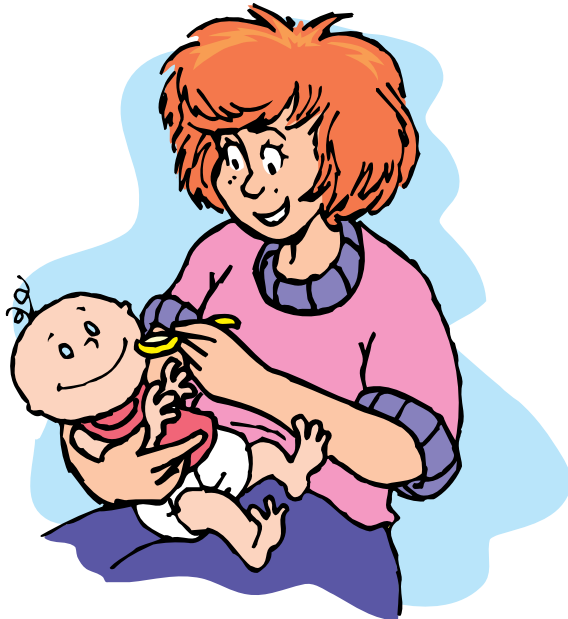
Do not worry - babies like adults can have 'off days'. If food is refused, take the food away and give breastmilk or formula milk. If the problem continues, contact your Public Health Nurse.

## Do babies need follow-on-formula milk?

There should be no need for follow-on-formula milks, provided your baby has a nutritious diet with some iron-rich foods. Continue with breast or formula milk until 1 year.

## Can I give bottled water to my baby?

Not all bottled waters are suitable for babies. Some waters may have too much sodium for young babies. Check this with your Public Health Nurse.



## Does my baby need vitamin supplements?

Healthy babies who are breastfed or fed formula milk do not usually need additional vitamins. A good mixed diet that includes a variety of foods will provide all the necessary vitamins. Some breastfed babies however, may require Vitamin D supplements. Discuss this with your Public Health Nurse or GP.

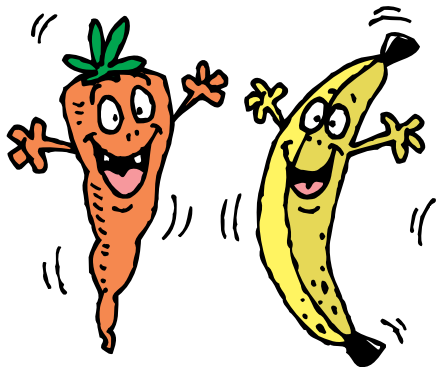
## I am worried about my baby's hard bowel motions. Are these normal?

Bowel motions should be bulky and soft. To avoid constipation be sure to give your baby plenty to drink in addition to feeds. Cooled boiled water should be a regular drink for any baby.

Babies over 4 months should be given fruit and vegetable purées (see Stage 1, page 7); babies over six months should be offered fruit and vegetables in addition to foods recommended (see Stage 2, page 9) such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals.

## Is it safe to microwave babyfoods?

The use of microwave ovens for heating any foods for babies is not recommended. Because the food is heated unevenly, there is a danger of 'hotspots' and the possibility of scalding a baby's mouth. If a microwave is used, the food must be thoroughly heated, left to stand for a few moments, mixed well and allowed to cool to feeding temperature.



# Recipes

## Apple & pear purée

- 2 large eating apples, peeled and chopped
- 2 ripe pears, peeled and chopped
- 4 tablespoons water

Put the fruit and water in a small saucepan and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Purée the fruit in a blender or sieve.

Peach, apricot & melon can also be used.

Makes 5 portions.

**Suitable from 4 months (stage 1)**

## Easy one pot chicken purée

- Small parsnip, sliced
- 1 tsp oil
- 4oz chicken breast cut into chunks
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled & chopped
- 1 medium carrot, trimmed and sliced
- ½ pint water

Heat oil in the saucepan and fry (sauté) the parsnips until softened. Add the chicken breast and sauté for 3-4 minutes. Add the vegetables, pour over the water, bring to the boil & simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and the vegetables are tender. Purée in a blender until the desired consistency.

You can also use lean beef or lamb,  
Makes 10 portions

**Suitable from 4 months (stage 1)**

## Chicken delight

- 1oz butter/margarine
- 1 tablespoon plain flour
- 4oz milk
- 4oz cooked chicken
- 2 tablespoons (cooked) frozen vegetables
- 1 small mashed potato

Melt the margarine/butter in a saucepan; stir in the flour and cook for two minutes. Gradually add the milk, stirring continuously. Bring to a gentle boil. Remove from the heat. Cut the chicken into small pieces and mash with the peas & potatoes. Stir into the white sauce. (Tinned tuna fish, salmon & white fish can also be used-be careful to remove even the very small bones from the fish and drain tinned fish).

Makes 2 portions

**Suitable from 6 months (stage 2)**

## Mince & cheese pasta

- 1 egg
- 8oz milk
- 2 tablespoons grated cheddar cheese
- 4oz cooked minced meat
- 1 cup cooked pasta (e.g macaroni)

Cook mince well. Boil pasta. Beat egg. Add milk and cheese to egg. Mix well - a blender is ideal. Add cheese sauce to the pasta & minced meat. Pour into a lightly greased ovenproof container. Bake in a 350°F (180°C, Gas4) oven for about 30 minutes.

Makes 3 portions

**Suitable from 6 months (stage 2)**

# Remember

- Introduce spoonfeeds at 6 months for exclusively breastfed babies and sometime between 4 and 6 months for formula fed babies.
- Always stay with your baby when he is eating.
- Never put rusks, cereals or other foods into the bottle.
- Do not add sugar or salt to food.
- Encourage your baby to drink from a beaker with 2 handles and no lid from 6 months.
- Bottles should be discouraged after the age of one year.
- Cow's milk is not suitable as a main drink for babies under one year.
- By one year your baby should be able to eat most of the foods eaten by the rest of the family.



Féidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

The Health Service Executive acknowledges and thanks the Community Dietitian Managers in Health Promotion, in each Health Service Executive area, for their input in the original production of this book.

Publication Date: 12/06  
Review Date: 12/08  
HPM00381