

0 - 4 MTHS

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# Feed me, I'm yours!



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## Ahh... hello world.

**I know you are going to take such good care of me! During my first few months of life, remember...**

- Breastmilk is best for me!
- Feed me only breastmilk or formula for the first four months.  
My tummy is not ready for anything else, including cereal.
- My wet and dirty diapers are one of the best signs that I am getting enough. I should have about 6-8 wet diapers each day after the first week.
- Please hold me during feedings. Propping a bottle can increase my risk of choking, ear infections, and tooth decay.

### **Just in case you are wondering how much to feed me...**

- I am not like any other baby. My appetite will vary from day to day. Follow my hunger cues to know when and how much to feed me. Don't get upset if I spit up. Spit up is very common for babies, especially during the first few months of life! As long as I am gaining weight and don't seem uncomfortable with eating, there is probably nothing to worry about. Talk to my doctor if you are concerned.
- If you nurse me, I will nurse 8 or even 12 times each day.
- If you give me formula, I will probably drink about 18-36 ounces each day.
  - My tummy is pretty small so I will probably not eat a lot at one time.
  - Offer me 2 ounces of formula every 2 to 3 hours in my first week of life.
  - By the time I am 4 months old, I will take about 26 to 36 ounces per day.

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## I am ready for solids.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding until I am 6 months of age. Most babies are ready for solid food when they are 4 to 6 months old.

### I will be ready for solid foods when I can...

- Sit supported with good head and neck control
- Open my mouth when I see a spoon
- Keep food in my mouth and swallow it

### Even though I am starting solids, I still need my mom's milk or formula.

- If I am nursing, you will need to nurse me 6 to 8 times each day.
- If I am drinking formula, I will need about 30-45 ounces each day.

### Now that I'm ready for some food...

- Deciding what food to feed me first may be confusing. For most babies, the order of food does not really matter.
- If starting with cereal, please offer me a single-grain cereal such as oats or barley.
- At first, mix 1 tablespoon of cereal with 4-5 tablespoons of breastmilk or formula. The mixture should be very thin, like milk. In the beginning, just dip the tip of the spoon into the cereal and place in my mouth. I may not eat much the first few times but don't give up on me.
- Over the next couple of months, work up to 1-2 tablespoons per feeding and thicken the mixture by adding less breastmilk or formula.
- Please be patient with me! I will probably refuse new foods the first few times and make BIG messes!

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## I am ready to explore new foods.

**Cereal sure is yummy, but I am ready to try something new! Please offer me new foods when I can...**

- Sit with some help
- Begin to chew thicker foods and solids
- Hold a bottle or cup with one or both of my hands

**As I start to take more solid foods, I still need my mom's milk or formula!**

- I am now very good at nursing, so I may finish quickly and nurse fewer times per day (about 4 to 6 times each day).
- If I am drinking formula, I will probably drink about 24-32 ounces each day.

### **As for foods...**

- It is time to start teaching me to drink from a cup. Begin to offer me a small amount of breastmilk, formula, or water in a cup.
- I am ready to try plain, single-ingredient foods such as pureed or strained meats, vegetables, or fruits. Dinners and desserts often contain added sugar and salt that I do not need.
- Foods should be smooth and runny in texture. As I get used to the solid foods, make the mixture thicker and lumpier. Give me only one new food at a time. Wait 3 to 5 days between new foods and watch for possible allergic reactions.

### **Remember...**

- Always wash your hands and my hands before feeding me.
- Please clean my gums and teeth with a clean cloth or infant toothbrush after eating.

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## I am ready for the dinner table.

**It's not much fun to eat by myself. I'm ready to join the family for meals. Please bring me to the table when I can...**

- Grasp and hold onto things

### **I still need my mom's milk or formula!**

- If you are nursing me, I will continue to nurse about 4 to 6 times each day.
- If I am drinking formula, I will drink about 24-32 ounces each day.
- Offer me breastmilk, formula, or water from a cup.

### **I am still too young for many solid foods because certain foods can cause me to choke:**

- Chunks of peanut butter
- Strawberries or grapes
- Hot dogs or sausages
- Nuts, seeds, or popcorn
- Raw vegetables
- Hard candy
- Chewing gum
- Marshmallows

### **Please do not give me the following foods until I am one year old:**

- Honey or foods made with honey
- Juice
- Cow's milk

### **Offer me the following foods:**

- Strained or pureed meats
- Pureed or mashed cooked beans
- Cottage cheese
- Plain yogurt
- Mashed fruits and vegetables

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## I can feed myself.

**I am so excited about using my hands to eat!  
Please let me try eating with my hands when I can...**

- Take a bite of food
- Pick up finger foods and feed myself
- Use a cup

**I would like to try some of these finger foods:**

- Small pieces of mild cheese
- Small pieces of soft, cooked, peeled fruits and vegetables
- Toasted bread squares, unsalted crackers, or small pieces of soft tortilla

**Even though I have started eating some solid foods, I still need my mom's milk or formula!**

- If you are nursing me, I should nurse 4 to 6 times each day.
- If I am drinking formula, I will drink 24-32 ounces each day.
- Offer me breastmilk, formula, or water from a cup.

**You can also offer me...**

- Mixed grain cereal
- Fruits and cooked vegetables, mashed with a fork
- Cooked plain rice and noodles, mashed or chopped
- Small pieces of cooked ground meat or chicken; remove all bones and tough parts

**Remember...**

Do not add sugar, salt, or spices to my food. Feed me during scheduled meal times to establish a routine. Do not force or bribe me to eat. I will be more likely to eat and try new foods if I am not force-fed.

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## I am growing up.

**It's hard to believe, but I am no longer a baby! I'm really getting the hang of eating and drinking. I am now able to:**

- Chew and swallow soft, mashed, and chopped foods
- Use a cup
- Start to use a spoon

**As I begin to eat more solid foods and drink from a cup, I can be weaned from the bottle.**

- If I am nursing, I will continue to nurse 4 to 6 times each day.
- If I drink formula, I will drink 24-32 ounces each day. Offer me formula in a cup more often than in a bottle.

**There are so many great foods I can eat! Offer**

**me small pieces of cooked or soft foods that the family eats:**

- Cereals, breads, crackers
- Fruits and cooked vegetables
- Cooked soft meats
- Cooked beans and lentils
- Casseroles

I am excited about eating! Please let me feed myself with a spoon or my hands. I am ready to use the bottle less and the cup more often. Give me a small cup of breastmilk, formula, or water with my meals. Wait until I am 1 year old to give me cow's milk.

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## Food Safety and Preparation

Keeping my food safe is very important. Please follow these guidelines to keep me healthy.

### Handwashing

The most important action you can take to protect me from foodborne illness is to wash your hands. Always wash your hands:

- Before and after handling my food.
- After using the bathroom, changing diapers or handling pets.

### When Making My Baby Food

- Prepare my fresh vegetables and fruits by scrubbing/peeling, and removing pits or seeds. Remove bones, skin, gristle and fat from meats.
- Steam or boil my foods in the smallest amount of water possible.

- Do not add salt or seasonings to my foods.
- Please do not give me sugar, honey or any other form of sweetener.
- Puree or mash my cooked food.
- Use extra care to keep all of my foods at the proper temperatures. Warming in the microwave can create hot spots, which may burn me.

### When Feeding Me Baby Food

- Make sure the safety button on the jar is down. Discard jars that do not “pop” when opened. Throw away plastic containers that are swollen.
- Avoid feeding me from the jar. Spoon food into a separate dish and throw away what I do not eat.
- Sharing spoons is not good. Don’t put my spoon in your mouth.

### When Making My Bottles

- Always use clean nipples and clean bottles. Sterilize bottles and nipples before first use.
- Gently heat my bottle by placing in a container of warm water. Please do not use the microwave.
- Throw away any milk (breastmilk or formula) that I leave in my bottle.



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### The new recommended daily intake of vitamin D is

400 IU/day for all infants, children, and adolescents beginning in the first few days of life. Ask your baby's healthcare provider if you should give your baby a vitamin D supplement.

### Alcohol, tobacco, and drug exposure are hazardous

**to your baby.** Eliminate substance use and give your baby a healthy start.

For more information, including referrals, ask your WIC counselor.



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