



4-6 Months

Your baby from four to six months

Supporting your family during your baby's first year



4-6
Months



Healthy eating and active play are important for your baby.

This booklet provides information on your baby's health and tips for parents' health too.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR BABY AT 4 - 6 MONTHS



Nutrition

- Give only breastmilk (no other food, fluids or water) until your baby is 6 months old. Breastmilk has enough water and all the nutrients your baby needs until around 6 months.
- At around 6 months, continue breastfeeding and start to introduce solid foods.



Active play

- Place your baby on their stomach (tummy time) for 10 - 15 minutes, 3 times each day. Make sure your baby is awake, supervised and mostly happy.
- Play, talk, sing and tell stories with your baby.
- No time spent watching/ playing with TV, computers, tablets and phones (screen-time) for children under 2 years.



Sleep

- Baby will sleep for around 12 to 16 hours in total (including naps) during a 24-hour period.



Immunisation

- At 6 months of age your baby should receive immunisations (vaccinations) to protect against some serious infectious diseases. Refer to your child's Personal Health Record (Blue Book) and talk to your Child and Family Health Nurse or Family Doctor.



BREASTFEEDING YOUR BABY



The best time to introduce solid foods

Milk feeding whether breast, bottle or cup provides your baby with all the necessary nutrients from birth to 6 months – thus, they don't need other food and drink.

Between 4 – 6 months, look for these signs to tell you that your baby is ready to start first foods (solids), when their nutrition needs change:

- Start holding their head up and sitting up without support
- They no longer poke out their tongue and push the food out of their mouth (this is a natural reflex to prevent choking in young babies)
- Showing an interest in food (with their eyes, gestures and sounds)

Do not introduce first foods (solids) to your baby before 4 months of age or after 6 months of age.

Potential problems if too early	Potential problems if too late
Baby will not get enough iron or other nutrients needed for growth	Baby's stomach and ability to fight illnesses may not develop properly
Baby could develop food allergies	Baby will be unable to chew and swallow properly, and could choke
Baby's speech development could be delayed	Mother breastfeeds less, and therefore she has less breastmilk for baby
Baby could become fussy when eating	Baby could get sick from germs in food

Breastfeeding and returning to work

Try to continue to breastfeed if you return to work. It does take some organisation, time and flexibility, but you can prepare yourself the following ways:

- Learning how to express your breastmilk before you return to work
- Offering a cup or bottle with expressed milk so that baby will get used to it
- Planning to breastfeed your baby before and after work. Night feeds are especially important for maintaining your milk supply and your bond with baby.



FIRST FOODS

How to introduce solid foods to your baby at around 6 months

Every baby is different, so it is important that you continue to follow their signs and interest in food to help them learn new skills for eating.

TIPS:

- Choose a time when they are not too tired or too hungry
- Start introducing small amounts of food either before or after their milk feed (e.g. 1 or 2 teaspoons of mashed food)
- Slowly increase the amount to 3 meals a day, by 7 months
- Use a plastic spoon to feed, and let them feed themselves with their hands
- Babies still rely on milk feeding. Do not replace milk feedings at this stage

Follow baby's hunger and fullness signs/cues

Hunger signs - "I'm hungry"

- Happy/excited to be put in high chair
- Leaning toward or reaching for food
- Opening mouth at sight of food



Fullness signs - "I've had enough"

- Turning head away
- Not opening mouth for food
- Covering mouth with hands



Develop new skills and make a mess!

It is normal for babies to make a mess when they are learning to eat independently.

Baby can develop new skills including:

- Learning to chew and swallow
- Learning to accept different tastes
- Learning to feed themselves
- Learning how to eat with their family.



What foods should I start with?





Offer baby a wide variety of nutritious foods and tastes in any order and include iron-rich foods.

- Iron-fortified infant cereal, mixed with breastmilk, formula or cooled boiled water
- Pureed well-cooked red-meat, chicken or fish (no bones)
- Pureed cooked eggs, lentils, beans, red kidney beans and cowpea

Then baby can also try the following foods:

- cooked vegetables and fruit – like potato, sweet potato, pumpkin, carrot, apple or pear
- finely mashed soft fruit – banana, mango or avocado
- full fat yoghurt, smooth cheese (e.g. ricotta)

Baby food products are widely advertised and expensive. Your baby does not need these.

<p>Birth – around 6 months Milk (breast, cup or bottle)</p>		<p>8 – 12 months Mashed, chopped or finger foods (no salt, sugar or fat added, or other bottled sauces)</p>	
<p>6-7months Finely mashed foods (no salt, sugar or fat added, or other bottled sauces)</p>		<p>12+ months Family foods – what you and your family are eating</p>	



PROGRESSING TO USING A CUP



At around 6 months all babies can start using a cup with handles and a lid to drink. Babies do not need fluids, except for milk and water.



Do not give your baby fruit juice or other sweet drinks. These can reduce your baby's appetite for nutritious foods and cause tooth decay.



YOUR BABY'S SLEEP

At 4-6 months babies grow and reach new developmental stages, and may be more fussy, cry or wake more often. It is ok and normal for baby to wake for overnight feeds.

Settling strategies:

- offer regular sleep times
- sleep baby in their own cot, next to your bed or in your bedroom for the first 6-12 months
- instead of blankets you can use a safe infant sleeping bag with a fitted neck, arm-holes and no hood (pictured)



YOUR BABY'S PLAY

Play is important for your baby's learning, development and wellbeing.

Activities you can try including:

- smiling or playing baby games
- stories or poems
- singing or moving to music
- playing on a mat on the floor
- laying on their stomach - tummy time

Mental and Speech Development

For babies under 2 years old, watching or using TVs, tablets, phones (screen time) can have a negative impact on language development and social skills.

Other play activities with you, family and friends are much better for your baby's development, learning and emotional health.



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN YOUR BABY IS 4 – 6 MONTHS

YOUR BABY'S HEALTH

- Continue exclusive breastfeeding
- Look for signs baby is ready for solid foods at around 6 months
- Try to find a sleep and settling routine that works for you and your baby
- Play with your baby for their physical, mental and emotional development: supervised tummy time, interaction by reading, singing, talking and cuddles
- Stay up-to-date with immunisations

YOUR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Try setting some achievable goals for your health and wellbeing. Choose a specific behaviour that is achievable and with a timeframe so that you can see your progress. For example:
 - Walk for 20 minutes outside at least 5 days a week
 - Eat 3 serves of vegetables 4 days a week
 - Meet with other mums once a week – try a local library for group activities
 - Walk and play at the local park with the children once per week
- Attend an Australian Breastfeeding Association Support Group for information, support and socialising
www.breastfeeding.asn.au/contacts/groups
- Join a play group www.playgroupnsw.org.au;
www.resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au

HOME, FAMILY AND WORK

- Create a home environment that is safe and ready for a baby on the move
- Eat meals together as a family as often as possible
- If returning to work, make a plan so that you can breastfeed or express your milk

SUPPORT SERVICES

If you have questions or problems you would like to discuss about your baby's health and development, talk to your Child and Family Health Nurse, Family Doctor, or consult these services:

Australian Breastfeeding Association www.breastfeeding.asn.au
Raising Children Network www.raisingchildren.net.au
Tresillian www.tresillian.org.au
Karitane www.karitane.com.au

Refer to Health Beginnings 2-4 months booklet for a detailed list of services.



Need an interpreter?

Call the free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450. If you don't speak much English then say in English "Arabic" and they will put you through to the right interpreter. Then ask them to phone the health service/number you need.

FOR MORE SUPPORT AND INFORMATION, CONTACT

HD

Health Direct Australia
www.healthdirect.org.au
1800 022 222

HB

Healthy Beginnings
SLHD-HealthyBeginnings@health.nsw.gov.au
www.healthybeginnings.net.au
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