



## Setting the stage for a healthy childhood

### Raising a healthy eater – birth to 12 months

Feeding your child is one of your most important jobs as a parent. It is how we help our children grow healthy and strong. Creating good habits and routines sets a child up for a lifetime of healthy eating.

#### Birth – 6 months

Feed your baby whenever they are hungry. Some babies will want to feed more frequently, or for a longer time, than others.

Trust your baby to let you know how much they need and feed them as much as they want.

#### 6 – 12 months

##### Parent/Caregiver decides:

- when to offer solid food
- what solid food to offer
- where to offer solid food

##### Child decides:

- how much to eat
- whether to eat

### Parent/caregiver responsibilities: 6 – 12 months

#### You decide when to offer solid food

At around six months, start with offering solid food 2 – 3 times a day and progress to 3 – 4 times by twelve months.

Try to offer food at the same time the rest of the family is eating.

Continue to give your baby breast milk or formula whenever they want it.

#### You decide what food to offer

Start with iron rich foods like meat, lentils and beans, and iron-fortified cereal. Offer twice a day.

Next, offer your baby the same healthy food that you and your family eat, in a texture that is right for them.

- ✓ Start with food that is mashed with a fork, or finely minced texture.
- ✓ Increase to lumpier textures, then small pieces of soft foods.

Letting your baby see and try many different flavours and textures will help them learn to eat a variety of foods.

Offer water in a cup. Juice, even if it is 100% pure, has too much sugar. If you give it to your baby, give no more than ½ cup per day.

#### You decide where to offer solid food

**Start sitting together for meals with your baby.** This way, it becomes a habit. Make mealtime a family time.

**Remove distractions.** Enjoy connecting with your family. Turn off the TV and keep smartphones and tablets away from the table so you can focus on your family.

**Enjoy each other while enjoying family meals.** Keep meal time relaxed to nourish the body and help your family make stronger connections.

## Baby responsibilities: 6 – 12 months

### Let your baby decide how much to eat

**Babies will eat the amount they need.** They have a strong sense of hunger, appetite, and fullness, so they are likely to stop eating when they are full rather than when the food is gone.

- ✓ When your baby is full, they will push food away, turn their head away, or shut their mouth.
- ✓ When your baby is still hungry, they will open their mouth when offered food.

Trust your baby to know how much food they need.

**Sometimes new foods take time.** Babies don't always like new foods right away. You may need to offer your baby foods many times before they try it. Be patient as your baby becomes familiar with new foods and don't pressure them to eat them.

### For more info and ideas:

#### Healthy Families BC

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/parenting>

#### Fraser Health Best Beginnings Website

<http://bestbeginnings.fraserhealth.ca>

### Let your baby decide whether to eat

**Keep mealtimes pleasant.** Don't force your child to eat.

**Patience works better than pressure.** Offer your baby many different foods. Then, let them choose if they want to eat them.

**Share this information with daycares and other caregivers.**



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*Give your child a healthy start by encouraging a healthy relationship with food, giving plenty of time for active play, and avoiding screen time and sugar sweetened drinks. Once children are 5 years old, a healthy goal is to Live 5-2-1-0 every day.*

**5 Enjoy-**  
FIVE or more vegetables & fruits every day

**1 Play actively-**  
at least ONE hour each day

**2 Power down-**  
no more than TWO hours of screen time a day

**0 Choose healthy-**  
ZERO sugar-sweetened drinks