

Giving Your Baby the Very Best Nutrition

(Birth – 5 Months)

Babies grow so quickly, and their needs constantly change. Here are answers to important questions you may have about your baby's nutrition.

What can I expect my baby to do as he grows?

From birth to 1 month of age, your baby will

- Begin to develop the ability to start and stop sucking.
- Wake up and fall asleep easily.

At about 3 to 4 months of age, your baby will

- Drool more.
- Put his hand in his mouth a lot.

At 4 to 6 months of age, your baby will

- Bring objects to his mouth.
- Begin to eat solid foods, such as iron-fortified infant cereal and pureed or strained fruits and vegetables.
- Explore foods with his mouth.

What should I feed my baby?

- Breastmilk is the ideal food for babies, and breastfeeding offers many benefits to both mother and baby. Breastfeeding helps mother and baby form a special bond, and it helps the baby resist colds, ear infections, allergies, and other illnesses.
- It is best to breastfeed for the first 6 months of life, but breastfeeding even for just a few months or weeks is beneficial.
- If you think you may not be able to breastfeed (for example, you have conflicts with school or work or a medical condition), or you are worried about not producing enough breastmilk, talk to a health professional, breastfeeding specialist, or breastfeeding support group. They



can answer your questions and help you come up with solutions. Your family and friends are also sources of support.

- If you decide to feed your baby infant formula, a health professional can help you choose the right kind and answer your questions about feeding.
- Cow's milk, goat's milk, and soy milk are not recommended until after your baby's first birthday.

How do I know if I am feeding my baby enough breastmilk?

- Your baby may show she is still hungry by sucking, putting her hands in her mouth, opening

and closing her mouth, or looking for the nipple. She may show she is full by falling asleep.

- Your baby will usually have five to eight wet diapers and three or four stools per day by the time she is 5 to 7 days old.
- Your baby will be gaining weight. She should gain 5 to 7 ounces per week and should double her birthweight by 4 to 6 months of age.

When and how should I introduce solid foods?

- Introduce solid foods when your baby can sit with support and has good head and neck control.
- Offer iron-fortified rice cereal as the first solid food, because it is least likely to cause an allergic reaction, such as a rash. Offer a small amount (for example, 1 or 2 teaspoons) of one new food at a time. Wait 7 days or more to see how your baby tolerates the new food before introducing the next new food.
- Introduce solid foods in this order: iron-fortified infant cereal, fruits and vegetables, and meats.
- Avoid foods that may cause choking, such as hard candy, mini-marshmallows, popcorn, pretzels, chips, spoonfuls of peanut butter, nuts, seeds, large chunks of meat, hot dogs, raw carrots, raisins and other dried fruits, and whole grapes.
- Do not add honey to food, water, or infant formula because it can be a source of spores that cause botulism, which can poison your baby.
- Do not add cereal to bottles, and do not use “baby food nurser kits” (which let solid foods filter through the bottle nipple along with the liquid). Your child may choke on the cereal.



How do I avoid feeding my baby too much?

- Learn how your baby shows he is hungry, and feed him when he is hungry.
- Feed your baby slowly. Do not enlarge the hole in the bottle nipple to make expressed breast-milk or infant formula come out faster.
- Do not add cereal to the bottle—this may cause your baby to eat more than he needs.
- Comfort your baby by talking to him and by cuddling, rocking, and walking him—not by feeding him. Using food to comfort your baby may teach him to use food as a source of comfort as he gets older.
- Feed your baby until he is full. It takes about 20 minutes for your baby to feel full. Do not force him to finish a bottle or other foods.

Notes

Resources

American Dietetic Association
Phone: (800) 366-1655
Web site: <http://www.eatright.org>

La Leche League International
Phone: (800) 525-3243
Web site: <http://www.lalecheleague.org>

USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center
Phone: (703) 305-2554
Web site: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic>

This fact sheet contains general information and is not a substitute for talking with your baby's health professional about your particular concerns about your baby.