

#	Age & Stage	Theme	Title
9	7-9 months	Feeding your baby	Did you know that healthy foods and healthy feeding habits help build a healthy brain?

Proper nutrition plays an important role in developing a baby’s brain. Here are some general guidelines:

- ◆ Breast milk contains all the nutrients your baby needs, as well as important antibodies to fight infection. All your baby needs for the first six months is breastmilk. No other fluids or foods are needed. The only exception is a daily vitamin D supplement. Talk to your health care provider about vitamin D. Continue breastfeeding up to two years and beyond. The longer you breastfeed, the more benefits you and your baby will get.
- ◆ When babies are six months old, they are ready to start solid foods. Your baby does not need teeth to start eating solid foods.
- ◆ Introduce iron-rich foods first, such as meat, meat alternatives (such as lentils, beans, chickpeas and tofu) and iron-fortified cereal. Iron is an essential nutrient for brain development.
- ◆ Encourage your baby to try a variety of different foods from all the food groups at the appropriate time within that first year. These foods can be pureed, minced or mashed. At first, your baby may not accept new foods. By closing their mouths or turning their heads away, babies show that they are full or do not like the food. If your baby does this, stop feeding that food. Try it again another time. It can take 8-10 trials or more for a baby to accept new foods. Keep mealtime pleasant.
- ◆ Include foods rich in omega-3 such as salmon and light canned tuna.
- ◆ Offer your baby the breast first, and then solid foods. This order changes after nine months.
- ◆ Offer homemade foods. Some processed foods (for example canned soups, macaroni and cheese preparations, sauces, etc.) are high in fat, sugar or salt. Read labels and try to avoid or limit these foods.
- ◆ Choose foods that are Bisphenol A (BPA) free. This chemical may be harmful to hormones. Most food and drink cans have BPA in their lining. Choose fresh and frozen foods to help limit exposure to BPA.
- ◆ Feed your baby at regular times. A predictable routine is important for brain development. When there is a routine, babies know their needs will be met.
- ◆ Include your baby as part of the family at mealtime. Use mealtime as an opportunity to interact with your baby. Talk to your baby about the food, its color, shape and texture.
- ◆ Let your baby tell you how much they will eat. Don’t pressure your baby to eat. When babies are full, they will let you know by turning their head, closing their mouth or pushing the nipple out of their mouth. Follow their lead and stop when they are done.
- ◆ Be a good role model when you eat. Your baby will follow your lead. You can inspire them to eat healthy foods.
- ◆ As children get older, try to involve them in meal preparation as much as possible, and make it fun! This will encourage a good relationship with homemade, healthy foods and mealtimes.

Links

- ◆ *Feeding Your Baby: From Six Months To One Year.* Best Start Resource Centre. beststart.org/resources/nutrition/pdf/feeding_baby_rev2012_LR.pdf
- ◆ Eat Right Ontario. ontario.ca/eatright