

Learning To Eat

From the first solid tastes to a joyful experience at the family table, Learning to Eat is designed for healthcare professionals like you to streamline consultations and provide expert advice on feeding practices.

All guidance aligns with the AAP, CDC, CACFP, DGA, and FARE.

*Scan to access your online tool
to create customized education
materials for your patients!*



This information is provided through the Gerber Medical Hub that supports healthcare providers with infant and young child feeding guidance.

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Learning To Eat

Welcome to **Learning to Eat**, a digital platform designed to share tailored evidence-based feeding guidance with parents based on the child's development — from starting solids up to 2 years of age.

From the first solid tastes to a joyful experience at the family table, this innovative tool allows healthcare professionals to streamline the consultation process. Use this tool to provide expert advice on feeding practices that are personalized and adapted to each situation.

All the guidance and information in Learning to Eat is consistent with current recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025.



**Create customized
evidence-based patient
education materials
at the click of a button,
in modern parent-
friendly formats!**



As easy as ...



- 1 Select patient milestone**
- 2 Select parent's top questions**
- 3 Download custom education handout for parents**

Learn more and start using the digital platform today at

LearningtoEat.co

Supported Sitter

Feeding and nutrition notes from your baby's 4+ months well-child care visit

How to know when my baby is ready for foods other than breastmilk or infant formula



Able to control head and neck.



Sitting up alone or with support.



Bringing objects to the mouth.



Trying to grasp small objects.



Swallowing food rather than pushing it back out.

What to feed

Anticipatory guidance for starting solids when your baby is ready

Foods to introduce to my baby first

Offer iron-fortified infant cereal, meat or other protein, vegetable, fruit, or yogurt.

Baby cereals with iron and pureed baby foods are great first foods for spoon-feeding.

Offer a variety of foods. Taking iron-fortified infant cereals for example, offer oat, barley, and multigrain cereals.

TOP TIP

Always consult with your health care provider on when to start solids



How to introduce solid foods

Continue to provide breastmilk or infant formula during the first year of life.

Feed baby in highchair stay with them in case of choking.

Pick your first food, such as iron-fortified infant cereal. Dip spoon into food and offer to baby.

How to prepare food for my baby to eat

Mash or puree cooked vegetables, fruits, and other foods until they are smooth.

Mix iron-fortified infant cereals with breastmilk or formula to make it smooth and easy for your baby to swallow.



How to feed

Feeding your baby when they are starting solids

How to tell if my baby is hungry or full



Look for hunger cues such as showing excitement when food is presented, opens mouth wide and leans toward spoon.



Stop feeding when your baby shows their fullness cues such as leaning away, pushing food away, clenching mouth shut, easily distracted, and looks elsewhere.

Foods for baby provide important nutrition and support development

- Around the age of 6 months, an infant's need for energy and nutrients starts to exceed what is provided by breastmilk and/or formula alone.
- Baby is developmentally ready for other foods and the natural transition to food.
- A nutrient-dense, diverse diet includes a variety of food sources from each food group (protein foods, vegetables, fruits, dairy, and grains, including iron-fortified infant cereals).
- Starting solids is necessary to meet energy and nutrient needs.



Follow safe feeding practices

- Ensure baby is securely seated in a highchair.
- Always be supervising feeding—you need to see your baby and watch them while they are eating. Never give them food while you are driving a car or pushing their stroller from behind.
- Avoid honey and unpasteurized foods and beverages.



Caregiver role

The most important ingredient is you!

Support your baby's development while feeding



Talk to your baby during feedings to support language skill development.

Seat baby in highchair facing you and others to enhance interaction.



Help your baby enjoy food and new foods



Talk to baby and give them food when you or the rest of the family are eating.

Show baby how to eat.



Provide foods around the same time every day to make it easier for baby to know when it's food time.

Independent Sitter

Feeding and nutrition notes from your baby's 6+ months well-child care visit

How to know when my baby is ready for foods other than breastmilk or infant formula



Able to control head and neck.



Sitting up alone or with support.



Bringing objects to the mouth.



Trying to grasp small objects.



Swallowing food rather than pushing it back out.

What to feed



What foods and textures to offer at about 6 months of age

Choose a variety of foods that provide important nutrients

Offer iron-fortified infant cereals, meats, and seafood with iron, zinc, choline, and/or omega-3 fatty acids to support your baby's brain development and overall growth.

Offer fruits and vegetables which have vitamins A, C, and E that support the immune system.

If breastfeeding, continue to supplement with 400 IU/day of vitamin D to support bone and teeth growth and development.



Choose and prepare foods to offer a variety of textures



Soft, mashed foods.

Thin, smooth iron-fortified infant cereals and fruit and vegetable purees.



Well-cooked, soft, stick-shaped, or palm-sized foods for self-feeding.



Important tips for feeding baby 6+ months

How to introduce solid foods

- Continue to provide breastmilk or infant formula during the first year of life.
- Feed baby in highchair stay with them in case of choking.
- Pick your first food such as iron-fortified infant cereal.
- Mix iron-fortified infant cereals with breast milk or formula to make it smooth and easy for your baby to swallow.
- Dip spoon into food and offer to baby.



How to feed

How to feed my baby



Spoon-feeding:
Offer smooth purees, mashes, and lumpy foods on a pre-loaded spoon or responsively feed baby with a spoon.



Baby-led weaning:
If you want your baby to self-feed all or most of their foods, you can offer table foods, finger foods, purees as dips or spreads prepared safely for your baby.



Baby-led feeding:
A combination of spoon-feeding, offering pre-loaded spoons and providing foods that baby can self feed.

There is no “right or wrong” feeding method. Choose what works best for you and your little one. The most important approach is following your baby’s hunger and fullness cues.

Follow your baby’s hunger and fullness cues



Look for hunger cues such as showing excitement when food is presented, opens mouth wide and leans toward spoon.



Stop feeding when your baby shows their fullness cues such as leaning away, pushing food away, clenching mouth shut, easily distracted, and looks elsewhere.

How to keep offering potentially allergenic foods

- Choose the potentially allergenic food you want to offer: peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, cow’s milk, wheat, soy, fish, shellfish, and sesame.
- Thin 1 teaspoon of nut butter with 2 teaspoons water or provide scrambled eggs, yogurt, iron-fortified multi-grain cereal, soft tofu in cubes, cooked fish, finely chopped well-cooked shrimp (not fried or popcorn shrimp), or tahini/hummus.
- Give your baby the potentially allergenic containing foods.
- No reaction? Continue to give your baby the potentially allergenic food 2-3 times/week.
- Consistent exposure can help reduce the risk of developing allergies to these foods.
- Avoid introducing before nap or bedtime to ensure you’re available to monitor any reactions.
- Discuss with your healthcare professional food allergies in children and diagnosing food allergies in children.

Follow safe feeding practices



Secure seated occasion in a highchair.



Avoid honey and unpasteurized foods and beverages.

Create a stress-free environment with few distractions so baby can focus on eating.



Always be supervising feeding – you need to see your baby and watch them while they are eating. Never give them food while you are driving a car or pushing their stroller from behind.

Caregiver role

The most important ingredient is you!

Support your baby’s development with feeding



Talk to your baby during feedings to support language skill development.

Seat baby in highchair facing you and others to enhance interaction.



Help your baby enjoy food and new foods

- You are responsible for what is offered to eat.
- You are becoming responsible for when and where your baby is fed.
- Baby is still and always responsible for how much and whether they eat the foods you offer.

Create your family mealtime and routine

- Share meals together for family bonding moments.
- Create a regular feeding routine so baby knows when to eat next.

Crawler

Feeding and nutrition notes from your baby's 9+ months well-child care visit

What developmental milestones to look for



Looks for objects when dropped out of sight (like spoon).



Bangs two things together.



Moves things from one hand to the other hand.



Uses fingers to "rake" foods towards themselves.



Sits without support.

What to feed

Foods and textures to offer



Foods that have key nutrients for baby

Offer iron-fortified infant cereals, meats, and seafood with iron, zinc, choline, and/or omega-3 fatty acids to support your baby's brain development and overall growth.

If breastfeeding, supplement with 400 IU/day of vitamin D to support bone and teeth growth and development.

Offer fruits and vegetables which have vitamins A, C, and E that support the immune system.



What textures to offer

- Include textures from all food groups: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and dairy products.
- Include a variety of textures: pureed fruits/vegetables, smooth infant cereals, mashed bananas/avocados/sweet potatoes, minced carrots/peas/soft fruits, cooked pasta/rice, and tender meats.
- Offer a variety of foods and textures helps develop their palate and encourages them to accept a wider range of foods as they grow.
- Repeatedly offer initially disliked foods until they become familiar and more likely to be accepted.



How to feed

How to feed my crawler?

How to tell if my baby is hungry or full



Look for hunger cues such as showing excitement when food is presented, opens mouth wide and leans toward spoon.



Look for fullness cues such as leaning away, pushing food away, clenching mouth shut, easily distracted, and looks elsewhere.

How to keep offering potentially allergenic foods

- Choose the potentially allergenic food you want to offer: peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, cow's milk, wheat, soy, fish, shellfish, and sesame.
- Thin 1 teaspoon of nut butter with 2 teaspoons water or provide scrambled eggs, yogurt, iron-fortified multi-grain cereal, soft tofu in cubes, cooked fish, finely chopped well-cooked shrimp (not fried or popcorn shrimp), or tahini/hummus.
- Give your baby the potentially allergenic containing foods.
- No reaction? Continue to give your baby the potentially allergenic food 2-3 times/week.
- Consistent exposure can help reduce the risk of developing allergies to these foods.
- Avoid introducing before nap or bedtime to ensure you're available to monitor any reactions.
- Discuss with your healthcare professional food allergies in children and diagnosing food allergies in children.

Follow safe feeding practices



Create a stress-free environment with few distractions so baby can focus on eating.

Secure seated occasion in a highchair.



Avoid honey and unpasteurized foods and beverages.

Always be supervising feeding – you need to see your baby and watch them while they are eating. Never give them food while you are driving a car or pushing their stroller from behind.

Caregiver role

The most important ingredient is you!

Support your baby's development while feeding



Talk to your baby during feedings to support language skill development.



Seat baby in highchair facing you and others to enhance interaction.

Help your baby enjoy food and new foods

- You are responsible for what is offered to eat.
- You are becoming responsible for when and where your baby is fed.
- Baby is still and always responsible for how much and whether they eat the foods you offer.



Create your family mealtime and routine

- Share meals together for family bonding moments.
- Create a regular feeding routine so baby knows when to eat next.



Toddler

Food and nutrition notes from your child's 12+ month well-child care visit

What developmental milestones should I look for?



Pulls up to stand.



Walks, holding onto furniture.



Drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it.



Picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food.

What to feed

What food and beverages to offer

What is a healthy dietary pattern for toddlers?

- Mealtime is all about learning, and your toddler will get plenty of practice when you offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day.
- Provide a variety of foods from all food groups: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins (beef, lamb, chicken, fish, turkey, eggs, tofu), and dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese).
- Avoid foods with added sugars (muffins, flavored yogurts, cakes, cookies, ice cream, chocolates, candies).
- Avoid foods higher in sodium (canned foods, lunch meats, sausages, hot dogs, ham, frozen dinners).
- Offer a variety of fish and shellfish that are low in mercury (clams, cod, crab, crawfish, flounder, haddock, lobster, oysters, perch, salmon, scallops, shrimp, tilapia, trout, canned light tuna, whitefish).
- Offer whole fat cow's milk or water and avoid sugar-sweetened beverages (soda, pop, soft drinks, flavored milks, sports drinks) and caffeinated drinks (soft drinks, tea, coffee, sports drinks).



What are sample portion sizes for toddler?



1/8 cup fruits



1/4 cup yogurt



1/2 oz equivalent grains



1/8 cup vegetables



1 oz equivalent meats/meat alternates

What foods have key nutrients for toddlers?



Offer iron-fortified cereals, meats, and seafood with iron, zinc, choline, and/or omega-3 fatty acids support your toddler's brain development and overall growth.



Offer dairy (cow's milk or yogurt) with calcium and fortified with vitamin D to support bone and teeth growth and development.



Offer fruits and vegetables which have vitamins A, C, and E that support the immune system.



How to feed

How to feed my toddler?

How to tell if my toddler is hungry or full



Look for hunger cues such as expressing desire for food with words, sounds, or gestures.



Look for fullness cues such as shaking head “no,” crossing arms, refusing food, and using words like, “all done” and “get down.”

How do I help my toddler accept foods and avoid picky eating behaviors?

- Continue to offer a wide variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, proteins, and dairy products in different ways, such as raw, cooked, or blended, to provide different textures and flavors.
- Be a role model and enjoy a variety of foods yourself as toddlers often imitate the eating behaviors of those around them, especially their caregivers.
- Offer your toddler choices within food groups, such as asking if they prefer one vegetable over another.
- Involve your toddler in meal planning, grocery shopping, and food preparation.
- Let your toddler participate in age-appropriate tasks like stirring ingredients or tearing lettuce which can make them more interested in their food.

Follow safe feeding practices

- Create a stress-free environment with few distractions so toddler can focus on eating.
- Be present with your toddler and supervise what and how much they are eating to reduce the risk of unsafe behaviors such as putting objects in mouth that are not foods or inserting food in their nose or ears.



Caregiver role

The most important ingredient is you!

Support your toddler's development while feeding



Talk with your toddler during mealtimes to support language skill development.

Seat toddler in highchair facing you and others to enhance interaction.



Help your baby enjoy food and new foods

- You are responsible for what is offered to eat, when, and where.
- Your toddler is responsible for how much and whether they eat the foods you offer.



Create your family mealtime and routine



Share meals together for family bonding moments.



Create a regular feeding routine so toddler knows when to eat next.

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