



GWINNETT PEDIATRICS & ADOLESCENT MEDICINE, P.C.

A Family Guide for Feeding your Child during the First Two Years of Childhood

Feeding in the first 2 years

During the past few months you've been meeting your baby's nutrition needs with breast milk, infant formula, or a combination of both. You've seen that feeding is a natural time for you and your baby to get to know and enjoy each other. During feedings, your baby learns to trust you, and you learn to "read" your baby's messages or signals, for example: "I am hungry" or "I'm full." This trust and communication between you and your baby is necessary to build a positive relationship. And it becomes even more important as your baby grows and starts to eat new foods.

Your baby grows and develops faster during the first year than any other time of life. Your baby's brain double in weight and body weight will triple. To develop properly, your baby must eat foods that contain calories and nutrients essential for growth.

After 4 to 6 months of age, your baby will continue to grow, of course, but more slowly. By the end of the first year, your baby's new skills will allow him or her to join the family mealtime. You'll still be making most feeding decisions, but your baby can start to make some food choices too.

This brochure's aim is to give you some guidelines for feeding your baby. The information is appropriate whether you're are with your baby during mealtime or whether you will be giving feeding instructions to a day-care professional or other caretaker.

Health, Happy Feeding

Your goal as a parent should be:

- To provide health meals that promote your baby's growth and development.
- To help your baby develop good eating habits and attitudes.

No two babies are exactly alike. Manufactures of baby food products promote their products based on guidelines that may or may not apply to your baby's needs. Also, well meaning relatives and friends may give you advice based on outdated information that "worked for them." You and your bay's doctors know your baby best. Keep a list of questions between each checkup and ask them during your regular visits with your baby's doctor. Always talk with your baby's doctor before making any changes in your baby's diet.

Also, be careful not to compare your baby's progress with other babies you may know. Don't push your baby based on what other babies are doing.

During the first 4 months of a baby's life, breast milk or infant formula with iron provides the calories and nutrients a health, full-term baby needs. Baby cereal and other foods are not yet necessary, and offering them may even lead to problems. For one thing, your baby may choke because tongue movements and swallowing skills are not yet fully

coordinated. Also, if you introduce food too early, you can increase their risk of your baby's developing reactions to foods, especially if there is a strong family history of allergy. And contrary to popular belief, feeding cereal at bedtime does not help a baby sleep through the night.

Fluoride is important for the development of health, teeth, which are already forming, although you may not be able to see him yet. Breast milk or infant formula does not provide enough fluoride. Be sure to ask your doctor if your baby needs fluoride or other mineral or vitamin supplements.

From 4 to 6 Months

Most doctors recommend introducing solid foods to babies between the ages of 4 and 6 months. By this age, your baby:

- Can sit up with support
- Has good control of the head and neck
- Can show a desire to eat by leaning forward or turning to you wide-eyed when food is in sight.
- Watches as you put food into your mouth and reaches out to grab it.

Your baby's tongue is now able to move the food safely from the front to the back of his mouth to allow swallowing with less risk of choking. This is a good time to begin to offer infant cereals and baby food.

“What solid foods should I feed my baby first?”

- Begin with iron-fortified single-grain infant cereal. Rice cereal can be started first, followed by oat cereal.
- Mix with breast milk, infant formula, or water with cereal. When your baby is about 6 months old, you may mix cereal with fruit juice.
- At first, make the cereal very thin so that it will be easy for your baby to swallow: 3 tablespoons of liquid mixed with 1 tablespoon of cereal. As your baby gets used to the new texture of more solid food, add less liquid to the cereal.
- There is no right, or wrong time to offer the cereal. Be flexible. Many parents choose mornings and evenings to offer cereal. When your baby is hungriest or bored, or when you have the most time may be the right time for you and your baby.
- Begin with 1 or 2 tablespoons of dry infant cereal for each feeding and slowly increase to 4 tablespoons.

- Always use a spoon to feed infant cereals so that your baby will gain experience with this new eating skill. This will take practice, patience, and lots of love from you.

“How can I help my baby learn to eat from a spoon?”

Here are some tips to make spoon feeding a positive experience for you and your baby:

- Use a small infant-sized spoon with a round, shallow bowl, rounded tip, and long handle.
- Try to feed your baby when he or she is hungry but not fussy. If your baby seems very hungry and impatient, you could offer a little breast milk or formula before offering solids.
- Be sure your baby is wearing a large bib. Eating will be a messy project at first, so don't worry about neatness.
- Hold your baby in your lap just as you would for breastfeeding or bottle feeding, except a little more upright.
- Place a little food on the tip of the spoon and gently place it on the middle of your baby's tongue. At first, most of the food may be pushed out by the tongue. Just collect it back on the spoon and place it on the tongue again. Before long, your baby will learn to swallow food easily and quickly.
- Relax as you feed your baby. Enjoy each other's company. Let your baby set the pace.
- Be flexible. If your baby doesn't seem ready to eat from a spoon, wait a few days and try again.

“What other foods can my baby eat?”

After your baby begins to enjoy cereal, offer strained fruits and vegetables. They are important sources of vitamins and minerals. These foods also add variety to your baby's diet by providing new colors, textures, smells and tastes.

Some parents offer fruits first. We recommend that you offer vegetables first as your child may resist vegetables if the sweeter-tasting fruit is offered first. In either case, introduce only one new food at a time over 4 or 5 days before introducing another food. This pace allows you to be sure that your baby tolerates the new food. The whole process of introducing cereal, fruits, vegetables and meats may take several months. When all

these foods have become a part of your baby’s diet, try to offer both green and yellow vegetables daily.

The amount of food your baby eats will be different each day, depending on his or her appetite. Three to four tablespoons of fruits, vegetables or both at lunch and dinner plus a severing of cereal in the morning and evening should be enough. Remember, babies don’t need to follow our ideas about eating certain kinds of foods at three meals each day. It really doesn’t matter which foods you offer at which meals. Lots of small meals will suite your baby’s needs just fine.

Suggested Feeding Schedule: 4 to 6 months			
	Breakfast	Lunch to Dinner	Evening
Breastfeeding/Formula	1 Feeding	1-2 Feedings	1 Feeding
Cereal	1 Feeding		1 Feeding
Fruit/Vegetable		1-2 Feedings	

Remember-most of the solid foods being added to your baby’s diet now don’t have as many calories as the breast milk or infant formula that you are feeding your baby. Your baby’s calorie needs for energy, growth, and development are still high, so the breast milk or infant formula is still important during the entire first year. Before making changes in your baby’s meals, consider your baby’s unique needs and talk with your baby’s doctor, nurse, or nutritionist.

As a general rule, it’s a good idea to avoid introducing new foods when your baby is ill or is bothered by teething. During these times, your baby will be comforted by a familiar routine, including diet.

“How much breast milk or infant formula will my baby need after I start feeding solid foods?”

While you introduce solid foods, your baby will continue to take about the same amount of breast milk or formula. He or she probably will want breast milk or formula first in the morning, followed by cercal a little later. Before your baby takes a morning nap, you may want to give breast milk or formula again. This pattern of alternating breast milk or formula with solid food should continue through-out the day so that you feed your baby about three or four solid-food meals and vive or six breast-feedings or bottle feedings.

Most important for successful meal planning is to ready your baby’s messages. Be flexible and schedule your feedings of breast milk or formula and solid foods around your

baby's individual needs. It's important to introduce each new food one at a time or over 4 or 5 days.

“How can I tell if my baby has a reaction to some foods?”

Food reactions include a skin rash or hives, vomiting, or diarrhea, nasal congestion or chest wheezing. Of course, all of these reactions can also occur for other reasons. At an early visit, discuss with your doctor when you should call if your baby develops any of these symptoms. Even if your baby does react to a food, most babies outgrow these sensitivities later in childhood.

“Does my baby need any vitamin or mineral supplements?”

Continue the fluoride supplement if your doctor has prescribed one. In addition, full-term babies need reliable sources of iron by 4 months of age. Until then, your baby's own system has been able to provide enough iron.

Good sources of iron include the following:

- Infant formula with iron
- Iron-fortified infant cereal
- Liver
- Meats
- Dried-fruits
- Dark-green, leafy vegetables

In addition, foods high in vitamin C, such as orange juice, can help your baby's body absorb the iron in other foods. Follow your doctor's advice about vitamins and mineral supplements.

“Should I heat or chill my baby's food?”

Most babies will eat food served at room temperature, but some prefer chilled fruits and fruit juices and warm vegetables. If you choose to vary the temperature of foods you offer, your baby will let you know his or her likes and dislikes. If you warm your baby's food, stir it well and test it before serving to make sure it is not too hot for your baby. Do not use a microwave to warm baby food. Microwaves often heat food unevenly and can result in burns to your baby's tender mouth. Electric feeding dishes are an easy way to warm foods for your baby.

“Can I save leftovers?”

It's important to feed your baby from a dish and not directly from the baby food jar. Food fed from the jar will be mixed with bacteria and saliva from your baby's mouth during

the feeding and cannot be saved. Spoon food into the serving dish, reseal the jar and refrigerate it. Be sure to use the remaining proportions in the next 2 or 3 days. Any food left in the serving dish should be thrown away.

From 6 to 12 Months

Between the ages of 6 and 12 months, your baby gains many skills that make it easier for him or her to eat a variety of foods. During this stage, your baby:

- Develops good head control and learns to sit up alone.
- Controls the position of food in the mouth with tongue and makes chewing motions.
- Develops finger-thumb “pincer” grasp, allowing him or her to pick up bite-sized pieces of food to put into the mouth.

This second half of the first year is an exciting time for your baby, who is fast becoming an explorer. He or she learns to crawl and walk while holding on to the furniture. Your baby also explores the smells, textures, and tastes that each new food offers. Make this an exciting time for your, too. Relax. Don't be concerned if your baby seems to “play” with food. That's just part of the normal exploring and discovery process.

As with every stage of development, it's important to consider your baby's safety. During mealtime, remember to lock the feeding tray and to use the lap safety belt to keep up your child in the highchair at all times.

“What kind of foods can my baby eat now?”

Your baby may now be ready to try foods with different textures. As always, check with your baby's doctor first.

You can now introduce your baby to strained meats. Offer single meats rather than meat-vegetables combinations. Occasionally, egg yolks may be served instead of meat. Many doctors recommend that you avoid feeding egg whites until after your baby's first birthday because some babies are sensitive to the egg-white protein. You can also offer plain yogurt. Yogurt is nutritious and can be served as a healthy dessert or snack now, as well as later in childhood.

Many parents prepare their own junior-type foods using food grinders, blenders, or food processors. For example, cooked carrots or green beans can be grounded or mashed to look like store-bought junior foods, as can some meats. There is no reason to add salts and seasonings to baby foods made at home.

Fruit juices, along with infant formula, are an important source of vitamin C. Apple and pear juice are good first choices and can be offered from a cup or used to dilute dry infant cereal. It's best to offer your baby juice in a cup rather than in a bottle to lessen the chance of tooth decay.

“What kinds of finer foods can my baby eat?”

Your 9 to 12 month old may be ready to try finer foods, such as soft-cooked vegetables, thinly sliced and peeled apples and pieces of ripe banana, or dry cereal. Finger foods also allow your baby to practice self-feeding. Don't help out just for the sake of neatness.

When choosing finger foods, remember to consider shape, texture and size. Avoid foods such as hot dogs, grapes, or peanuts. These slippery, round foods can cause your baby to choke.

“When can my baby begin to drink from a cup?”

When your baby is about 7 or 8 months old, he or she reaches and grabs for many new objects. This is a good time to let your baby begin to learn the mouth skills that he or she will need to be able to drink from a cup. Choose a small cup that is easy for your baby to grasp. Some parents prefer using a cup with two handles. Others prefer a small cup with no handles. Either way, your baby will need lots of help. Hold the cup to your baby's lips and offer a few sips of juice or formula. Be prepared for lots of spills in the beginning, but don't cry over them! With regular practice your baby will improve quickly. Even so, most babies can't drink from a cup without help until about 18 months of age.

While your baby is learning to drink from a cup, he or she will continue to be bottle fed or breastfeed. Avoid putting your baby to bed with a bottle, as this may cause choking. Also, after your baby's teeth start to come in, going to sleep with a bottle can cause tooth decay.

Suggested Feeding Schedule: 6 to 12 Months				
	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Evening
Breakfast Feeding/Formula	1 Feeding	1 Feeding	1 Feeding	1 Feeding
Meats/Other proteins			1 Feeding	
Cereal/Breads	1 Feeding			1 Feeding
Fruit/Vegetable		1 Feeding	1 Feeding	

Notes:

- *Continue breast-feeding for as long as possible.*
- *Number of feedings at breast can vary considerably.*

- *Most babies don't need more than 32 oz of formula per day.*
- *Add unsweetened dry cereals, toast, and crackers at 9-12 months.*
- *Offer fruit juice 2-3 oz per cup.*
- *Begin with strained, purred or mashed fruits and vegetables.*
- *After 9 months, add soft or cooked slices or pieces of fruit and vegetables.*
- *Begin with strained meats and yogurts*
- *After 9 months, begin 1-2 servings per day of ground or finely chopped meat.*
- *Other protein foods after 9 months, egg yolks (2-3 per week) mild cheese, peanut butter, cooked dried beans.*

“Should I start to feed cow’s milk to my baby now?”

“Don’t feed cow’s milk to your baby until after his or her first birthday. During the first year, even as your baby begins to eat different kinds of foods and learns to drink from a cup, breast milk or infant formula with iron continues to be the most important single source of nutrition. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, whole cow’s milk and low-iron infant formula should not be fed during the first year of life.

Cow’s milk does not contain enough iron, which is necessary for brain growth and development. Babies who don’t get enough iron may develop iron deficiency, which can lead to anemia and possible delays in some developmental abilities.

Breast milk and infant formula with iron contain the right amounts of calories, protein and sodium to meet your baby’s needs. Cow’s milk has more sodium and protein that babies need during the first year.

So continue to feed your baby breast milk or infant formula with iron throughout the entire first year of life. These milk feedings are the only consistent and familiar source of calories and nutrients your baby can count on during all the fun of learning to eat solid foods and adapting to new tastes.

By the way, contrary to what some well-meaning people may tell you, research has shown that iron in infant formula will not cause babies to develop constipation.

From 12 to 18 Months

What a difference a year has made! Your baby has grown from a dependent newborn to an energetic toddler who seems to be in constant motion. As your toddler gets better at walking and climbing, his or her curiosity and energy also increase. A long with these changes, your toddler begins to develop a sense of independence. Most toddlers want to do things their way, when they want to, and by themselves. This is not only normal

behavior-it is an important stage in your child’s development that leads to the ability to make decisions.

During the first year, your baby’s doctor or nurse guided you at each office visit about what food to offer and when to introduce new foods. It is easy to become less concerned about your baby’s diet as he or she begins to eat table food and the doctor no longer checks the diet as closely as during the early months. Unfortunately, as with many adults, toddlers may end up eating foods that are too high in calories, fat, cholesterol, salt, or sugar and too low in iron and fiber. Lifelong eating habits may be formed during these toddler years, so it is important to continue to pay attention to your toddler’s diet.

“What new foods should I offer my 12 to 18 month-old?”

If you are still breastfeeding your child, there is no reason to stop now. If you are feeding your child infant formula with iron, you may continue to do so, or with your doctor’s advice, you may switch to milk, you must make sure that he or she gets enough iron, because cow’s milk has almost no iron. Many doctors prescribe supplemental iron drops or a daily multivitamin with iron. Also, be sure that you feed your baby whole cow’s milk. Low fat or skim mile may not provide enough calories for proper growth.

At this age, many children prefer soft and cooked table food, although some still like the texture and taste of certain baby foods and infant cereals. It is important to offer well-balanced meals and snacks from the Four Food groups. Typical selections are listed in the box below.

Dairy	Grains	Protein	Fruits and Vegetables
2 to 3 cups of milk or infant formula with iron a day	Iron-fortified infant cereals mixed with milk or juice	Chicken	Fruit or fruit juice (especially citrus) daily
Cheese	Unsweetened dry cereals	Fish	Yellow or orange vegetable at least once/day carrots. Squash, tomatoes, beets, sweet potatoes
Yogurt	Breads	Veal	Leafy green vegetables once/day (lettuce, broccoli, spinach, cabbage)
Margarine (instead of butter)	Enriched Pasta	Cooked dry beans and peas	Potatoes (boiled, mashed or baked-not fried)
	Rice	Occasional red meat, fat trimmed	
	Barley	Peanut butter	
		Eggs (not more than 2-3 yolks/week)	

Notes:

- *Only rarely offer smoked, salted or delicatessen meat, such as hot dogs, bacon, ham and salami.*
- *Too much milk is filling and leaves little room for other iron-containing food.*
- *Peanut butter may occasionally be substituted for meat*
- *Avoid covering potatoes with butter or cheese.*

“What should I do if my child refuses to eat or only wants to feed himself or herself?”

Mealtime is a good time for your child to express a newly found sense of independence. He or she may seem stubborn or uncooperative, but this behavior is normal. There are lots of reasons why your child may not seem as interested in eating. First, most children develop definite food likes and dislikes during the toddler stage. Some even become picky eaters. Also, after 6 months of age, your baby’s rate of growth slows, which may be accompanied by a decrease in appetite. Finally, now that he or she is devoting so much energy to learning new skills, such as walking and talking, food may become less interesting.

On the other hand, the 12 to 18 month old will become more interested in the process of self feeding. What is eating and how it’s eaten become much more important to your child than how much is eaten. Your child may begin to insist on using the cup, picking up food with fingers, and using a spoon without your help.

Both of these eating patterns are normal. Don’t turn mealtime into a battleground by trying to force-feed your child. Try these tips to keep mealtimes happy:

- Allow your child to self-feed. By 15 to 24 months, most children use a spoon well. Mastering these skills is very important. Meals will take longer and be messier, but it’s worth it.
- Be sure to use an over sized bib. If your child throws or drops food onto the floor, be sure to put a plastic tablecloth or newspaper under the highchair. Keep a wet paper towel handy for spills.
- Let your child decide how much to eat. Don’t worry about underfeeding if your child chooses from a variety of foods and is growing well.

Trust your child’s appetite.

If your child ask’s offer small, nutritious snacks, but not more often than twice a day.

Serve small portions of food. Your child can always ask for more. Finishing a small portion will give him or her a sense of accomplishment.

Don't use food as a reward (especially sweets) or punishment (vegetables). Avoid statements such as, "If you don't eat your lima beans, you won't get dessert."

Don't force your child to sit at a table to finish eating after everyone else has left. Remember, if your child sometimes skips a meal, it will not be harmful.

Don't criticize or praise your child for their eating habits. Children should eat to please themselves.

Remember, sometimes it's easier to change the food than to change the child.

Feeding your child during the first 2 years should be fun for both you and your baby. These early feeding experiences can establish lifelong eating habits. Your baby knows you care by the way you respond to his or her needs. Keep mealtime nutritious, relaxed and cheerful.

"Learning Together" is a joint-project of Ross Laboratories (make infant formulas, Isomil, Similac and Alimentum) and Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.