

RAISING ADVENTUROUS EATERS

with first foods

Now is the time for your baby to move past purees and smashed foods to begin exploring a wide variety of textures and flavor combinations by enjoying modified versions of family meals. Engage your baby in mealtime conversations and embrace the mess, as your baby is learning how to self feed at this age.



What Foods Do I Offer?

- **VARIETY:** Continue to offer a variety of fruits, veggies, proteins, and grains in a rainbow of colors. Share family meals together with recipes that have more combined ingredients, flavors, and spices. If your child chooses not to eat certain veggies or fruits, continue offering them multiple times on other days. Sometimes up to 8-10 tries to help with taste acceptance.
- **TEXTURE:** By 9 months, make sure your baby has moved on from pureed or smooth foods to chewing a variety of soft bite-sized or handheld foods. Store-bought purees and pouches can be an easy way to feed your baby, but limit them to times when they may be needed for convenience, or use as a dip for more textured foods.
- **ALLERGENIC FOODS:** By 9 months, your baby may have tried all 9 of the high-allergen foods: dairy, egg, peanut, tree nut, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, sesame. Once a high-allergen food is introduced, it is important to maintain it in your baby's diet on a regular basis. Early and constant exposure has been shown to reduce the risk of developing food allergies later.
- **READ LABELS:** Be aware that many convenient toddler "snack foods" like cheese puffs, fruit-flavored gummy snacks, yogurt melts, and toddler prepackaged meals may have more added salt and sugar than what is recommended for that age. Try to limit using them.



How Much Do I Offer?

- Around 9 months, most babies eat 3-5 small meals or snacks, spread throughout the day. Offer about 1/2 a cup of a variety of foods per meal.
- Babies still need breastmilk or formula for calories and nutrition but may be slowly replacing bottles with solid food. Consider offering meals or snacks before formula and/or breast milk as your child's interest shifts to solid foods.
- Remember to look for hunger and fullness cues. Trust your baby to regulate their own food intake and do not pressure them to take more bites.



LOOK FOR THIS ICON

Products approved to use PHA's icon contain over 50% veggies and no additives.

PHA  **Veggies Early & Often**
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How Do I Offer Foods?

- Instead of being spoon fed or handed foods, at 9 months babies should be mostly picking up foods and spoons and feeding themselves. Continue close supervision while serving finger foods.
- Embrace the mess. Allowing babies to get messy during meal times helps with sensory development and lets them become more familiar and comfortable with foods with a variety of textures. If they start throwing food, it may mean they are done eating and ready to get down from their chair.
- Feed your baby modified versions of your family meals so they can get used to the ways you season foods. It also helps reduce the need to prepare multiple meals now and in the future. This may mean chopping an ingredient smaller or cooking it slightly longer so it is soft. Babies under 12 months old need very little sodium, so set aside your baby's meal portion before seasoning with salt for the rest of the family.



What About Drinks?

- Your baby is still consuming breast milk and/or formula for calories, hydration, and nutrition. Wait until 12 months to substitute some or all of this intake with whole cow's milk. At one year of age, more calories will come from solids than whole milk or breast milk. Talk to your child's doctor if you have any questions or concerns about stopping bottles or using an alternative milk.
- Offer up to a max of 8 ounces of water for the full day in a small open cup or straw cup. This water is important to help support healthy digestion and may even prevent chronic constipation.
- Milk, juice, and other beverages (carbonated soft drinks, tea, etc.) should not be offered to babies under 12 months old.



Boosting Feeding Development

- 1. ORAL MOTOR SKILLS:** At 9 months, babies develop more of a circular or rotary chew when eating. If their chew appears to be more of an up and down or "squish with the tongue and swallow" pattern, you can encourage better chewing by placing a soft food item directly on the jaw in the back of their mouth where their new molars will soon appear. Press firmly to help your child feel the food and to prompt that first chew.
- 2. GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:** Spend plenty of time playing on the floor and encourage babies to attempt to crawl, pull up to stand, take steps holding onto furniture and eventually take steps independently. These activities strengthen leg, arm, and core muscles (chest, belly, & back) and will help them to feel stable as they sit in a feeding chair and self feed.
- 3. FINE MOTOR SKILLS:** The "raking" movement with their whole hand gradually turns into a pincer grasp, where they can more precisely grab and release food with their thumb and pointer finger. Help your baby learn to dip and scoop with a spoon by gently guiding their spoon as they hold it.
- 4. COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Babies at this age are beginning to understand language more than they can express it. Continue talking about what you are doing throughout the day such as naming foods when grocery shopping or preparing meals. Engage your baby in family meal conversations.

REMEMBER to share this information with anyone in your household or support system who will also be responsible for feeding your child.

SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR IDEAS AND RECIPES FOR FINGER FOODS:



The information contained in this guide should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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