



## Healthy Baby Toolkit

## Why use the healthy baby toolkit?

Without sufficient food and care the first two years of life, children will struggle with mental and physical development. They may not grow in weight and height to their potential and they may struggle with intellectual achievement in school. In some cases, these deficiencies cannot be overcome in later years. Thus, the **amount of food** children eat, the **number of times** per day children eat, and the **texture** of food children eat will impact how they grow.

## What is the healthy baby toolkit?

The healthy baby toolkit is designed for use with infants 6-23 months of age to ensure they receive the recommended amount of food at each meal for optimum growth and development. The toolkit includes:

1

A bowl with lines and symbols that cue age appropriate meal **frequency** and **volume** for children at different ages<sup>1</sup>: 6-9 mos., 9-12 mos., 12-23 mos.



2

A **slotted spoon** to guide **optimal thickness/texture** of infant foods and complementary foods. If the food does not drip through the holes in the spoon, it is thick enough to ensure sufficient energy and nutrient density.



3

A pictorial counseling card that uses **locally adapted images** to explain how to use the toolkit to achieve optimal dietary diversity, infant and young child feeding practices, and safe handwashing and food/water preparation.

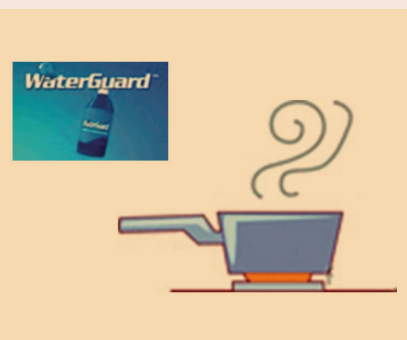
<sup>1</sup> These portion sizes and meal frequencies are in accordance with UNICEF 2006 infant and young children counseling guidelines. The volumes indicated in the feeding bowl correspond to the approximate functional stomach capacity of most children at the appropriate ages: 6-8 months old - 125 ml (meal frequency: 2 meals/day), 9-12 months old - 150 ml (meal frequency: 3 meals/day) and, >12 months/ 12-23 months - 250 ml (meal frequency: 3 meals/ day).



**Eat foods from at least 4 different groups every day**



**Wash hands with soap**






**Use clean water to prepare food**



**Clean bowl and spoon after each use**

## How do you use the healthy baby toolkit?

Child's age	Key nutrition message	Comments			
0 – 6 months	Infants ONLY need breastmilk for the first six months of life. It is their food, water, and medicine. Babies tummies aren't fully developed until 6 months. An infant under six months who is given other foods / drinks gets sick more often, and does not achieve optimal physical and mental development compared to those infants who are given only breastmilk.	If a baby urinates several times a day and defecates every day, then s/he is likely getting enough breastmilk, even if the baby is crying a lot. Breastfeed frequently during the day and at night at least 6-8 times every 24 hours. Mothers should eat two extra meals per day while they are breastfeeding. This extra food gives mothers strength and energy. Infants can get the benefits of milk, porridge, water, and/or traditional medicine from their mother's breastmilk. Instead of giving these to the baby directly, give it to the mother and the baby will benefit.			
Child's age	Key nutrition message	Amount of food per meal	Frequency of meals	Texture of food	Illustration
6-9 months	At approximately 6 months, babies need more than breastmilk to grow and develop well. Feed your baby a variety of foods from different food groups (see the counseling card) for strong and healthy growth and development. Infants are ready for food and liquids other than breastmilk when they are able to sit up and move their heads on their own.	To help children > 6 months learn how to eat, feed them food before switching to breastfeeding. That way they will be most hungry when food is given to them and will be more likely to practice eating, chewing and swallowing. Begin with 2 tablespoons and gradually increase to the level of 6-9 months as indicated on the toolkit bowl.	As a child ages and their stomach grows, they should be fed more often and more food at each meal. Feed the child 3 meals a day and add 1-2 nutritious snacks. Boiled orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes are a safe, tasty and healthy snack for babies.	A child's stomach is small and fills up quickly. Therefore, they need to be fed thick and enriched porridge several times a day. Foods that can stay on the <b>toolkit spoon</b> are thick enough for children. Begin with mashed family foods and thick, enriched porridges.	
9-12 months	Food provides the fuel for children to grow, learn and play. Without it, they will not be as active, healthy or smart as they could be. Different types/groups of food help children's bodies in different ways. For example, foods from animals – like meat, milk and eggs – build up muscles and help their bodies grow strong and fight illness. Fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and help build immunity to protect against illness. It is important for children to eat foods from these different groups as often as possible to gain all the possible benefits.	Serve the baby food up to the level of 9-12 months indicated in the <b>toolkit bowl</b> . When children are just starting to learn to eat (at 6 months) they may not be able to eat a lot of food. Parents should encourage children to eat more food and gradually increase the amount fed to them at each meal until they are able to eat <b>up to their mark on the toolkit bowl</b> .	3-4 meals with breastfeeding and 1-2 nutritious snacks per day. Boiled orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes are a safe, tasty and healthy snack for children. Ensure that children eat from at least 4 of the 6 food groups.	Mashed or finely chopped food that can be picked up by the child. Foods that can stay on the <b>toolkit spoon</b> are thick enough for children.	
12-23 months (or >12 months)	Older infants may try to feed themselves – encourage them to do so! Children may be messy and take a long time to eat. That is normal and a part of learning to feed themselves.	Serve the baby food up to the level of >12 months indicated in the <b>toolkit bowl</b> . Never force children to eat. If the child does not finish the food, families should cover the food and store it for up to one hour in case the child gets hungry later. It should be eaten or discarded after one hour.	Feed the child a variety of locally available family foods from 4 or more of the 6 food groups. Children in this age group should eat 5 times a day (3 meals and 2 snacks). Continue to breastfeed.	Finely chopped small, soft pieces of food which can be picked, chewed and swallowed comfortably by the child. Mashed foods and porridges can also be given. Foods that can stay on the <b>toolkit spoon</b> are thick enough for children.	



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