

6-8 MONTHS

Your baby from six to eight months
Supporting your family during your baby's first year



6-8
MONTHS





YOUR BABY AT 6 - 8 MONTHS

Healthy eating and active play are important for your baby.

This booklet provides information on your baby's health and tips for parents' health too.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Baby nutrition

- **0 - 6 months**
Breastmilk (or formula) only
- **6 - 12 months**
Continue breastfeeding and at around 6 months start to introduce a variety of solid foods, starting with iron rich foods
 - at around 6 months if not breastfed, start using a cup instead of a bottle aiming to stop all bottle feeds by 12 months
- **12 months and beyond**
Continue breastfeeding up to 2 years of age and beyond



Active play

- **Encourage free movement**
Supervised tummy time and play time on a playmat on the floor should increase to at least 10 - 15 minutes 3 times a day
- **Limit inactivity**
Children aged 0 - 5 years shouldn't be still for longer than an hour at a time, unless they are sleeping
- **No screen time**
Children under 2 years should have no screen time including no TV, DVDs, using computers, iPads, tablets, smart phone or any other electronic devices



Immunisation

- At 6 months your baby is due for immunisations to protect against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B, polio, pneumococcal disease
- Influenza vaccination is available for your baby from 6 months, discuss with your GP

FEEDING YOUR BABY



INTRODUCING SOLIDS

Milk feeding whether breast, bottle or cup would have been your baby's main source of nutrition until around 6 months of age. Now that they are around 6 - 8 months, in addition to milk feeding them, introducing a variety of food is important to meet their increased iron, calcium and energy needs.



Introducing iron rich food

- Iron is important for growth and development
- Until around 6 months, babies get enough iron from breastmilk
- After 6 months, in addition to milk, babies should also have food high in iron including:
 - minced meat (beef, lamb, chicken)
 - fish
 - legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas)
 - iron enriched rice cereal
 - eggs
 - green leafy vegetables

Age	Texture of food
Birth — around 6 months	Liquids
6 - 7 months	Finely mashed or pureed foods (no salt, sugar, fat or other flavour added)
8 - 12 months	Mashed or chopped foods (no salt, sugar, fat or other flavour added)
12+ months	Family foods

Finger foods

Babies love to explore new flavours and textures of food. As they develop and learn new skills, from about 7 months they can begin to chew soft foods.

Ideas for soft finger food



Steamed/boiled large slices or chunks of pumpkin, sweet potato, potato, broccoli, zucchini, cauliflower



Raw slices or chunks of peeled banana, melon, avocado



Toast fingers



Boiled eggs



Steamed fish

Fuss Free Mealtimes

Parents can often be told how much and what to feed their babies and less commonly taught how to feed them. If you experience fussy eating with your baby, this is normal but it can be hard to handle. Fussy eating can be a stage during your baby's development and the way they explore their environment and independence.

Tips

- Offer new foods regularly so that by the time your baby is 12 months old, they should be eating the same foods as your family
- It can take up to 15 times before babies accept a new food, so keep trying
- Offer your baby a variety of finger foods
- When spoon feeding your baby, give your baby their own spoon too
- Eating is a social occasion. Sit and enjoy your meals with your baby
- Allow your baby to take food from your plate. Eat together as a family as often as you can as it helps them learn how to eat and to try new flavours/foods. You are their food role model - so eating healthy foods with your baby models positive messages around food and eating

Check out the Fuss Free Mealtimes resource for more information www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/populationhealth/healthychildren

Eating safely

As babies are learning to eat solid foods they might experience choking. It is important:

- to always watch them while they eat
- to sit in one spot and not to let them move around while they eat
- to use the safety harness when they sit in a high chair
- to test the temperature of food before offering it to your baby
- to avoid giving them foods that are likely to cause them to choke:
 - small hard foods (nuts, undercooked pieces of hard fruit and vegetables, popcorn)
 - small slippery foods (whole grapes, whole cherry tomatoes)
 - fruit that have seeds in them (cherries, apricots, nectarines)

Breastfeeding in public and returning to work

You may be aware that it is important to breastfeed your baby for as long as 2 years and beyond as it can benefit your health and your baby's.

Benefits of continuing to breastfeed include:

- continued emotional bonding with your baby
- strong sense of reconnection between you and your baby following separation
- your body will continue to release positive hormones when you breastfeed or express milk which increases your feelings of relaxation
- protects your baby from getting sick
- it is free, safe and convenient

Mothers who are confident with breastfeeding in public, who organise a plan to breastfeed at work and who are supported by family, workplace and the community, are likely to continue breastfeeding.

Check out the Healthy Beginnings Antenatal, 0 - 2, 2 - 4, and 4 - 6 month booklets for more ideas to support you with breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond.

Cup drinking

From 6 - 12 months the only drinks babies need are breast-milk, infant formula or cooled boiled tap water. After 12 months, children can have full fat cow's milk. Fruit juice, soft drinks, flavoured milk and other sweetened drinks aren't healthy or recommended for babies. They have a lot of sugar and can cause tooth decay.

When your baby is 6 months old, you can start teaching them to drink from a cup. By the age of 12 months, it is recommended that all bottles are stopped and babies only use a cup.

Choose a training cup that:

- is small, plastic and non-breakable
- has handles for your baby to hold
- does not have a teat/spout/valve that the baby has to suck on
- is **not** spill-free

Teething

Babies can start teething from 6 months to 2 years of age. It is important to start cleaning and brushing their teeth as soon as they appear, to prevent tooth decay. During this time your baby may drool more than usual and chew a lot. It may help to massage their swollen gums with your finger for 2 minutes, use a teething ring or a cold wet face cloth.

3 easy steps to keep your baby's teeth and gums healthy



Put your baby to bed without a bottle

Stop the bottle at around 12 months of age



Start drinking from a cup at around 6 months of age

Cooled boiled tap water until 12 months of age



Start brushing when your baby gets their first tooth

Until your baby is 18 months, use only water on their toothbrush, after then start using a low fluoride toothpaste



YOUR BABY'S SLEEP

Your baby's sleep patterns will continue to change within their first year. It is important to watch your baby's cues and identify when they are tired, need to be comforted and then put to bed for a sleep. At 6 - 8 months most babies sleep for about 15 hours every day. They have about 1 - 2 hours of sleep 2 - 3 times during the day.

Babies may wake at night for many reasons other than hunger including:

- they may need reassurance and a cuddle or comfort to go back to sleep
- they are feeling unwell
- they are going through a change in their growth and development stage

Aim for your baby to be able to self-settle without feeding to sleep. Check out the Healthy Beginnings 4 - 6 month booklet for strategies to help you with self-settling. If you are feeling challenged by your baby's sleep behaviour and would like support contact your Child and Family Health Nurse, GP, Tresillian or Karitane for further information.

YOUR BABY'S PLAY

Play is important for your baby's learning and their body development. There are many opportunities for you to interact and play with your baby including during bath time, when changing their nappy, or just before settling to sleep.

At 6 – 8 months babies like to play with you and also enjoy independent playtime.

Try to do a mix of both active and quiet playtime.

ACTIVE PLAY: sitting up (with support), rolling, crawling on the floor with safe toys that they can play with.

QUIET PLAY: reading and talking, calmly singing and cuddling are suggested just before sleep time so your baby can feel safe and calm, which helps them get ready to sleep.

Safety tips

It is time to prepare for a moving baby. As your baby grows they will go through different developmental milestones including crawling, rolling, shuffling or walking. It is important to think about how you can make your home a safe place for them to move about.

Things to consider include:

- Choking and suffocation
- Fires and burns
- Falls
- Poisoning
- Smoking

For more information please contact Kidsafe NSW on 02 9845 0890 or visit www.kidsafe.com.au

No screen time from birth to 2 years

It is recommended that children under 2 years should have no screen time including no TV, DVDs, using computers, iPads, tablets, smart phone or any other electronic devices.

Any screen time for children under 2 years can:

- limit time for active play and learning
- reduce the time for language development
- impact on their ability to stay focused for longer times
- affect the development of the full range of eye movement



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

The Healthy Beginnings booklets have provided you with different information and tips on why it is important to look after your physical health and emotional wellbeing.

We know that looking after yourself is easier said than done especially when looking after your baby who needs a lot of your time and attention. Looking after yourself by having some 'Me' time will give you more energy to care for your family, even if you just do this for 10 minutes a day.

Things you can try	
Healthy eating	Prepare a healthy meal such as an omelette or a salad and eat in peace
Regular exercise	Working out for even 10 minutes can keep you healthy and energised
Meditate	Close your eyes and clear your mind or do some deep breathing
Get a massage	Getting those knots and tension out can reduce any stress you may be feeling
Talking to someone you trust	Catch up with a friend or family either face to face, over the phone or via video chat
Read	Book, magazine or whatever you enjoy
Journal	If you are feeling overwhelmed writing in a journal or diary can be therapeutic

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN YOUR BABY IS 6 - 8 MONTHS



YOUR BABY'S HEALTH

- Continue breastfeeding, aim to continue up to 2 years or beyond
- Feed, play, sleep cycle
- Introduce a variety of foods to your baby especially high iron and calcium foods
- Look for opportunities for your baby to self - soothe and settle. Aim for independent sleep
- Keep up to date with immunisations
- Encourage your baby to have plenty of active play for their physical and mental development
- Plan a Personal Health Record check for your baby at 8 - 12 months with your CFHN or GP



YOUR HEALTH

- Aim for healthy eating including 2 fruits and 5 serves of vegetables every day
- At least 30 minutes of physical activity every day
- Take some time for your self - care and be aware of your emotional health
- Seek support if needed



HOME, FAMILY AND WORK

- Create a home environment that is safe and ready for a baby on the move
- Eat meals together as a family as often as possible
- Plan and discuss with your employer your return to work requirements so that you can breastfeed or express your milk



SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Attend an Australian Breastfeeding Association Support Group for information, support and socialising www.breastfeeding.asn.au/contacts/groups
- Make social connections with family, friends and neighbours
- Visit www.resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au for other groups in your area
- Join a play group - check out: www.playgroupnsw.org.au
- Try your local library for rhyme time or story time and other free activities
- Try an online parenting forum to stay connected with other mums



Next Booklet

**8-12
MONTHS**

CONTACT

HB

Healthy Beginnings
www.healthybeginnings.net.au

HD

Health Direct Australia
www.healthdirect.org.au

Acknowledgements: The Healthy Beginnings program was funded by the NSW Health Translational Research Grant Scheme 2016 (ID number: TRGS 200) and NHMRC Partnership Project 2019 (#APPI169823). We sincerely thank participating partners of the project from the Sydney, South Eastern Sydney, South Western Sydney and Southern NSW Local Health Districts, and members of the advisory committee and project management team. This resource was part of the Healthy Beginnings program developed by SLHD Population Health and Community Health Services. The information for this resource was obtained from NSW Health sources, National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Breastfeeding Association and Raising Children Network. The information in this resource is for general guidance only and should not be a substitute for professional advice



UPDATED APRIL 2021