

# Baby's First Foods

What a baby eats in his first year of life may predict his eating habits as he gets older. Babies who breastfeed for longer periods of time as an infant are healthier eaters at age 6. Babies fed healthful food between 6 and 12 months of age will also show a tendency to eat healthier at age 6.

Scientists call this pattern of influence of early eating *metabolic programming*. The first foods a child eats have long-lasting effects on growth and development. Parents make the food decisions for their baby. Healthy food choices and feeding patterns help develop lifelong patterns that lead to good health.



Babies can have mild to severe allergic reactions to new foods. Reactions include rashes, hives, fussiness, eczema, vomiting or wheezing.

Doctors have recently issued *new guidelines* concerning *allergenic* foods like milk, eggs, fish and nuts. A baby who tolerates non-allergenic foods may begin taking allergenic foods before age 1. As with non-allergenic foods, parents will offer one food at a time, every 2 – 4 days, and observe their baby for an allergic reaction. Parents should introduce all new food. Never allow a daycare provider to give your baby a new food.

Doctors recommend exclusive breastfeeding for about the first 6 months. At around 6 months of age, babies are generally ready to start eating solid foods that are easy to digest. Parents should introduce *non-allergenic* foods first. These include foods like rice cereal, oatmeal, and pureed fruits and vegetables.

In addition to solids, baby will continue to breastfeed or take formula until he is one year old. Milk fat develops healthy brains. It also helps strengthen bones and teeth.

When starting solid foods, offer only 1 food at a time. Introduce a new food every 2 – 4 days. This allows you to notice any allergic reactions.

If you buy prepared food, never feed your baby from a jar. Put a small amount in a bowl and promptly refrigerate the unused food. If making food at home, wash hands often. Bake or steam fruits and vegetables to preserve vitamins and minerals.



See [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org) for more information.

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