Feeding Your Older Infant

By now, your baby is learning to drink from an open cup and is interested in feeding themselves! Give your baby a spoon to practice eating. It will be messy at first!

- Include your baby in family meals. Offer at least three meals and two snacks every day.
- Try soft or mashed foods like soft fruits, cooked vegetables and pasta. Cut food into small pieces and remove seeds and bones. Babies like to practice picking up small things with their thumb and fingers.
- Offer foods for chewing like dry toast, crackers and bite-size pieces of cereal.
- It is recommended to start foods such as peanut and nut products, eggs, yogurt/cheese/foods made with milk, wheat, sesame, soy, fish and shellfish around 6 months of age to decrease the risk of developing a food allergy. Once introduced, it is important to continue offering these foods 2 to 3 times a week.
- When starting potentially allergenic foods like those listed above, start with a small amount on the tip of a spoon. Wait for 10 to 15 minutes and then slowly feed the rest. Set 2 hours aside to watch your infant. Avoid nuts and seeds as these are choking hazards. Thin out peanut and nut butters and tahini (sesame) with fruit or vegetable purees, infant cereals, breast milk or formula to avoid choking.

Ask your WIC staff for suggestions on how to get more fresh fruits and vegetables, and ways to use baby foods if your baby starts to refuse them.

Foods to Avoid

- Don't give **honey or foods made with honey** (including honey graham crackers and cereals made with honey) to infants under age one. Honey can make babies very sick.
- Never feed infants **undercooked or raw animal foods** like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and milk.
- Avoid feeding foods that may **cause choking**, for example, small pieces of hard, raw vegetables or fruits, dry or tough chunks of meat, whole nuts and seeds, round pieces of food like hotdogs, popcorn, and grapes, and sticky or gooey foods like candies, fruit snacks and marshmallows.
- There's no need to add **salt or sugar** to your baby's food. Limit desserts and other high fat and high sugar foods, babies don't need them.



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Encourage Drinking From a Cup

- Keep practicing with an open cup. Babies can start being offered small amounts of plain water, so they get used to the taste. Using fluoridated drinking water (tap water or bottled water with fluoride added) or checking with your baby's healthcare provider about a fluoride supplement is recommended to help prevent future tooth decay. Infants under 12 months of age should not drink any other beverages, such as milk, soy beverage, or juice, unless recommended by your healthcare provider.
- It is recommended to breastfeed until at least 2 years of age, or as long as mutually desired. If breastfeeding stops before age 1, wean to iron-fortified infant formula in a cup. Babies need either breast milk or formula until they turn one. After the first birthday, formula is no longer needed, and whole cow's milk can be introduced.
- Set a goal to have your baby off the bottle by 12 months of age and no later than 18 months. The sooner your baby is weaned, the easier it is. This protects them from excessive milk intake, iron deficiency, and tooth decay.



Enjoy Feeding Your Baby

Your baby will soon be a year old! Feed your baby when your family eats.

Your baby might spit out food, make a face, and make a mess. Try not to stress; they are learning!

Learn your baby's cues for hunger and respect your baby's signs of being full. Your job as a parent is to decide what food is offered, when it is offered and where it is offered, and it's up to them to decide if they eat it and how much.

For More Information

Talk to your local WIC agency staff. For contact information, call 800-532-1579 or visit hhs.iowa.gov/food-assistance/wic-Iowa or www.signupwic.com

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