

## Expanding the menu for your baby

### Key points:

- It takes time for babies to get used to new tastes and textures.
- Keep offering foods previously rejected.
- For allergy prevention, babies should be given peanut butter, cooked egg, fish, shellfish, soy, sesame, tree nuts (such as cashew or almond paste), dairy and wheat products before 12 months. Once these foods are introduced, continue offering them twice a week.
- Offer foods from each of the five food groups every day.
- Always supervise babies and young children when they are eating.

Expanding the menu begins when your baby tastes their first food. From that moment, an increasing range of foods and textures supports them to develop chewing and eating skills that are essential for growth and health. Introducing solids was outlined in [‘How to determine baby’s first foods?’](#). Below is some extra information to support your baby or toddler to expand the menu.



### Learning to eat is not always pretty!

It’s normal for babies to gag (but not choke), to spit out new foods, to make funny faces and make a mess! It takes time for them to get used to new tastes and textures. Continue to offer a variety of foods, including the ones they haven’t seemed to like previously.

Your baby will be very messy and slow until they master the skill of eating, including how to get food to their mouth. Allowing your baby to explore their food. Touching it and playing with it will help them learn about new foods, as well as develop fine motor skills.

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**Offer foods from all five food groups, every day.**

Babies and young children need to learn to eat a variety of foods from each of the food groups to make sure they are getting all the nutrition they need. Children who grow up in families that eat a variety of foods from the five food groups are more likely to make their own healthy choices as they get older.

Each day, offer foods from each of the five food groups	
<i>Food group</i>	<i>Examples of foods that could be offered</i>
Grain (cereal) foods: choose mostly wholegrain and/or high fibre varieties	Bread, wraps, rolls, rice, pasta, noodles, oats, wheat cereal flakes or biscuits, muesli, crispbreads, crumpets, English muffins.
Vegetables and legumes/beans	Carrots, beans, peas, broccoli, spinach, salad greens, cucumber, capsicum, corn, potato, sweet potato, tomato, chickpeas, lentils, red kidney beans, black beans.
Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans	Beef, lamb, chicken, fish, eggs, chickpeas, lentils, red kidney beans, black beans, tofu, nuts and seeds.
Fruit (fresh, canned, frozen or dried)	Apples, bananas, oranges, apricots, kiwifruit, plums, grapes, watermelon.
Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat	Milk, cheddar cheese, ricotta, yoghurt, soy milk with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100mL.

The [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) provide recommendations for healthy eating patterns based on current scientific research.

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### Choking

Most foods can be given to very young babies if they are offered in textures they can manage. To prevent choking, always supervise babies and young children while they are eating. Foods that are more likely to cause choking are nuts, apple, grapes, sausages/frankfurts and meat with small bones. Ensure babies and children are sitting down when they eat to reduce the risk of choking. Cut up foods such as grapes and sausages until they can manage them whole. Avoid offering whole nuts until they are 3 years old. Doing a first aid course is also a good idea for parents.

### There are some foods to avoid until your baby is a certain age

While most foods can be given to very young babies in textures they can manage, there are some foods that are best avoided until your baby is certain age.

- Avoid honey until 12 months old
- Avoid raw or runny eggs and foods containing raw eggs (e.g. homemade mayonnaise) until 12 months
- Avoid reduced-fat dairy until 2 years old (full cream dairy foods are recommended).

### Introduce all potentially allergenic foods before 12 months to help prevent food allergy

Delayed introduction of allergenic foods has been shown to increase the chance of developing food allergy. Before 12 months of age, all babies should be given peanut butter, cooked egg, fish, shellfish, soy, sesame, tree nuts (such as cashew or almond paste), dairy and wheat products ([preventallergies.org.au](http://preventallergies.org.au)). Once these foods are introduced, it is recommended to continue offering them twice a week. This advice is also for babies from families with siblings or parents that already have food allergies or other allergic conditions. There is good evidence that for babies with severe eczema and/or egg allergy, regular peanut intake (twice weekly) before 12 months of age can reduce the risk of developing peanut allergy (<http://www.leapstudy.co.uk/leap#.YFax2q8zZPY>). Well-cooked egg should be given before 8 months. Introduction of daily fresh fruit and vegetables might decrease the risk of asthma.

Some infants will develop food allergies. If there is any allergic reaction to any food, stop offering that food and seek advice from a doctor with experience in food allergy (see 'What are the signs of food allergies in babies?'). Continue to introduce other new foods. Some foods can irritate the very sensitive

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skin on babies faces and cause redness. This is not food allergy. Smearing food on the skin will not help to identify possible food allergies.

### Resources for Families:

Healthy Eating for Children (National Health and Medical Research Council – NHMRC):

[www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/The%20Guidelines/n55f\\_children\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/The%20Guidelines/n55f_children_brochure.pdf)

Australian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy:

[www.allergy.org.au/hp/papers/infant-feeding-and-allergy-prevention](http://www.allergy.org.au/hp/papers/infant-feeding-and-allergy-prevention)

Nip Allergies in the Bub (National Allergy Strategy website): [www.preventallergies.org.au](http://www.preventallergies.org.au)

### Further support

If you are concerned about your child's food intake, eating behaviours, growth or nutrition-related health, contact a GP, paediatrician or Accredited Practising Dietitian who can provide a comprehensive assessment that considers your child's medical history, eating patterns including mealtime experiences, physical activity and genetic factors.

Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian with experience in infant and child growth -

<https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/find-an-apd/>