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Nutrition and your baby 8-12 months

At this age, meal times are all about helping your baby try new tastes, textures and smells from nutritious healthy food and enjoy their favourite foods. The important thing is not to force your baby to eat as you both want to enjoy this time.

From 8 months

From about 8 months of age your baby will start to chew using their gums.

This is a good time to increase the variety in their diet. For example vegetables (e.g. cooked carrots, potato and pumpkin), fruit (e.g. apple, banana, melon), whole cooked egg, cereals (e.g. wheat, oats), bread, pasta, nut pastes, dairy foods such as full-fat cheese, custards and yoghurt if you haven't started already. This is also a good time to start introducing finger foods such as: toast fingers and sugarless rusks.

At 12 months

Around 12 months of age, your baby will be ready to eat most things the family is eating. They will actively reach for food. Foods can now be chopped up.

Offering additional drinks using a cup

At this age cooled boiled water is recommended as a drink. Fruit juice, tea, herbal teas, coffee, soft drinks, cordials or other beverages are not necessary or recommended for infants. Cow's milk should not be given as a main drink before 12 months.

Foods to avoid offering until your baby is older:

- Raw eggs and poultry that have not been cooked properly, as these may contain salmonella bacteria.
- Honey, as it can be contaminated with Botulism spores, and cause your infant to become very unwell.
- Whole nuts are not recommended for children under 5 years of age as they pose a choking risk but nut pastes are allowed.

Tips For Successful Enjoyable Meal Times

There are theories on how to help meals be enjoyable and a 'healthy experience' that your baby will take with them through life. Here is one:

You are responsible for

- Choosing and preparing the food
- Providing regular healthy meals
- Helping eating times to be pleasant
- Modelling how to eat healthily and in a social way
- Noticing your baby's individual likes and pace of taking on new foods

Your baby is responsible for

- Eating the amount he needs
- Learning to eat the food your family eats
- Growing in the way that is right for him
- Learning to behave well at meal times.

During meals it helps to:

- Face your baby so you can be social and know when to slow down the offering of food.
- Talk about the food they are eating and other things that may be happening in the day
- Give your baby some control in the meal time e.g. hand over the spoon or bowl for a period
- Sooth your baby as they learn to eat e.g: learn the early hunger cues and have food ready before putting them in their chair, sometimes a distraction is helpful like singing, playing a finger game or patting them gently.
- Keep things pleasant with smiles and praise for your baby.

Keeping baby safe

Concern about your baby choking is normal. It is challenging to progress your baby from mashed food to pieces, chewy foods or even allowing them to bite off what they want. Gagging is a normal part of your baby learning to chew food enough so that they can swallow it easily. Try to be calm as they learn to re chew the food and swallow again. Choking is different and requires you to give immediate help to your baby. You can do first aid courses in person or even online for simple instructions.

Age	Suggested progression
8-9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most babies are enjoying 3 meals a day and even a small nutritious dessert.• Continue to increase the amount and variety of foods guided by your baby's behaviours and feeding cues.• Mashed and minced food will now be enjoyed.• Your baby will enjoy having their own spoon to hold at meal times.• At this time some parents choose to offer solids first then milk feed after.* <p>*be led by your baby's behaviour and interest in solids to help you decide over the next few months.</p>
9 & 10 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three meals may be enjoyed by your baby especially if they eat with the rest of the family.• Your baby may also need a healthy snack either in the morning or afternoon as they are very busy exploring their world.• Continue to increase the amount and variety of foods.• Your baby will have started to develop their pincer grasp (thumb and finger used to pick up objects) and enjoy practising picking up smaller pieces of food.
11 & 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food should be cut up in bite size pieces or coarsely mashed with a fork with lots of finger foods.• Continue with 3 meals, and often now two healthy snacks per day.

Safety tips

- Use a secure chair with safety harness
- Check fish for bones
- Check that other bones e.g: chop bones, do not have pieces that can be chewed off
- Not to offer food when your baby is laughing or crying
- Allow your baby time to chew and swallow at their pace
- Always stay with your baby while they are eating.



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