



How to Make every bite count!

A guide to nutritious family
meals for babies and toddlers.



Solid Foods: Ready, Set, Go!

Introducing your baby to solid foods at around six months of age is recommended because their increasing nutritional needs can no longer be met from breast milk or formula alone.

Your choice of food and how you feed your baby and toddler is important for their growth and development and will have an important influence on their eating habits throughout life.

Recipes for family meals made from fresh, nutrient-rich foods are provided. They show you how to cook one meal for your baby and the whole family.

Which foods when?

Infant Feeding Guidelines say that foods can be introduced in any order and at any rate as long as they are rich in iron, nutritious and the texture is suitable for your baby's stage of development.

After 12 months of age, your baby should be consuming family foods consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Iron-rich foods

Iron-rich foods are recommended as first foods at around 6 months of age to prevent iron deficiency which can affect your baby's brain development.

Allergies

There is no need to delay the introduction of nutritious foods such as cooked eggs or peanut butter, as there is no evidence that this reduces the risk of allergies.

Food safety

For food safety reasons, it is best to avoid honey and raw eggs before 12 months of age. Hard, small round foods such as whole nuts or raw carrot sticks are a potential choking risk and should be avoided until after 3 years of age.

Dairy foods

Breast milk should be the main drink until at least one year of age. Commercial infant formula is a satisfactory substitute for babies who are not breastfed.

Whole-milk products such as yoghurt, custard and cheese can be introduced from six months of age and full cream cow's milk can be given as part of solid foods (e.g. on cereal). As a drink, full cream cow's milk can be offered from 12 months of age.

Good sources of Iron

The best sources of iron are foods high in 'haem iron'

High in haem iron	Iron (mg)
Beef, 50g, cooked	1.5
Lamb, 50g, cooked	1.5
Pork, 50g, cooked	0.6
Fish, 50g, cooked	0.5
Chicken, 50g, cooked	0.4



- The redder the meat, the higher the amount of haem iron.
- Eating red meat such as beef and lamb 3 to 4 times per week is recommended to meet iron and zinc needs.

Other sources of iron are foods high in 'non-haem iron'

High in non-haem iron	Iron (mg)
Spinach, ¼ cup (50g), cooked	2.0
Tofu, 50g	1.2
Iron fortified rice cereal (5g dry cereal with 40ml water)	1.1
Egg (1) 60g, cooked	1.0
Legumes, 1/3 cup (50g), cooked	0.9



Meat-free diets

- Carefully choose suitable food alternatives that are high in iron.
- Combining plant food sources of iron with foods high in vitamin C (e.g. half an orange) helps to increase iron absorption.

Food textures for developmental stages

Babies can vary in the time needed to progress through each stage. Depending on the type of food and your babies development, you can go straight to the lumpy mushy or finger food stage.

The “Silky, Smooth” stage

Around 6 months of age, red meat is suitable for babies and an important addition to the diet.

- For a smooth texture, meat must be tender and moist. Puree meat with boiled water or casserole juices. See silky steak and smooth stew recipes (page 6).
- Blend meat with a variety of different vegetables such as zucchini, pumpkin and sweet potato.



The “Lumpy, Mushy” stage

Around 7 months of age, it is important to encourage your baby to chew varying kinds of textures and not stay on silky smooth foods too long. This helps to develop muscles for chewing and speech.

- Progress the texture to include small, fork mashed soft lumps.
- Your baby is able to chew foods even without teeth.
- It is normal for babies to gag (but not choke) on lumpy foods when they are learning to chew. They may also spit food out. Don't be concerned. It is all part of the learning process.



The Finger Food stage

Around 8 months of age, your baby's hand control improves. As soon as they are able to grasp objects, encourage them to feed themselves by offering soft finger foods.

- Cut food into small pieces which can easily be managed or held onto for chewing.
- Avoid hard foods such as raw carrot, celery, apple or whole nuts as these foods are potential choking risks. Large round foods such as grapes and sausage can also pose a choking risk; however these can be simply cut in half or quarters.



The Toddler stage

Around 12 months of age, your toddler will start exerting their independence. They can be picky about when and what foods they will eat. It is important you maintain control of the food on offer!

- Let your toddler choose what to eat from a limited choice of only nutritious foods.
- Avoid encouraging or rewarding them with less nutritious treats for finishing their plate.
- If your toddler does not eat as much as you think they should, do not offer favourite alternatives – even if they are nutritious e.g. cow's milk.
- Make water the only drink of choice at meal time as filling up on milk and juices can reduce appetite and displace good food sources of iron and zinc.
- If your baby or toddler rejects a new food, offer it again until the food becomes familiar and accepted.
- Never leave your baby or toddler alone while they are eating or let them wander as they eat.



How much food does my baby need?

- Children have a natural ability to adjust the amount they eat according to their needs and growth patterns. Every child is different; some days they will eat more than other days.
- Continue to consistently offer small portions of nutritious foods and trust your child to decide how much to eat at each meal and over the day.

First food recipes

When you first introduce beef and lamb to your baby, these simple recipes will help get you started. It is recommended you progress very quickly to a lumpy texture.

Silky steak for babies

100g rump steak*, trimmed of fat

1 tsp olive oil

100g cooked pumpkin

1. Heat barbecue or non-stick frying pan. Rub meat with oil. Cook over medium-high heat for 3-4 mins on each side or until cooked. The meat should feel springy. Rest meat for 5 mins.
2. Slice meat and combine with cooked pumpkin and blend until smooth or for a lumpier texture, partially blend and fork mash.

Suggested vegetables to combine with meat puree: pumpkin, carrot, sweet potato or zucchini.



Smooth stew

200g diced lamb or beef*, trimmed of fat

1 tsp olive oil

1 carrot, peeled and chopped

1 stick celery, chopped

1 potato, peeled and chopped

1. Toss meat in oil. Heat small non-stick frying pan. Add meat and brown. Remove from pan and place in small saucepan.
2. Add carrot, celery and potato to saucepan and add 1 cup water (or enough to just cover contents). Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 1 ½ - 2 hours or until very tender.
3. Blend until smooth or for a lumpier texture, partially blend and fork mash.



* For more information on different beef and lamb cuts, visit www.themainmeal.com.au

Storing food for babies

Fridge

- Cover, cool and refrigerate cooked meat immediately.
- Keep no more than 2 days in small, airtight containers.

Freezer

- Always add moisture to sliced, cooked meat when freezing e.g. boiled water, meat juices, mashed vegetables or casserole juices.
- Once food is cooked, freeze immediately in small portions in airtight containers. Use within 4 weeks.
- For small portions, freeze in ice cube trays and place in airtight freezer bags.
- Thaw cubes in refrigerator as required.
- Never refreeze meals that have been initially frozen then thawed.
- You might find it more practical to cook a batch of meat and freeze small portions

Reheating

- Reheat thawed or refrigerated meat meals in a small amount of water in a small pan or microwave proof dish in the microwave.
- Make sure the meat and juices boil for a few minutes to ensure the food is thoroughly heated through (heat to at least 70°C).
- Mix well and check temperature of the food before giving to your baby.

Adapting the family meal

The following recipes illustrate how to adapt the family meal to meet your baby's different developmental stages. Adjust the ingredients and flavours to reflect your preferred cuisine or cultural background.

A baby's taste buds are quite sensitive.

- Add more intense spices and herbs such as chilli to your meal once your baby's portion has been served.
- Avoid adding salt to your baby's food so they will learn to enjoy the natural flavours of the food.
- Avoid adding sugar (and honey) to your baby's meals and use as little sugar as possible in cooking.

Beef & Veggie Pasta Salad

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 30 mins

Ingredients

600g rump steak, trimmed of fat

1 ½ tbsp olive oil

800g pumpkin, peeled, seeded, cut into 1.5cm cubes

250g farfalle pasta

150g green beans, trimmed, cut into 3cm lengths

100g baby spinach leaves

125g fresh ricotta

2 tbsp toasted pine nuts, to garnish

Method

1. Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan forced) and place pumpkin on a tray lined with baking paper. Spray pumpkin with olive

oil and roast for 25-30 minutes or until golden and tender. Set aside.

2. Cook pasta in a large saucepan of boiling water according to packet instructions, adding beans for the last 2 minutes of cooking time. Drain well.

3. Meanwhile, heat a large non-stick frying pan or char grill over a high heat. Brush steak with 2 teaspoons olive oil. Cook steak for 2-3 minutes each side for medium or until cooked to your liking and rest for 5 minutes, loosely covered with foil.

4. Toss pasta, beans, pumpkin, sliced steak, spinach, ricotta and remaining olive oil together. Serve garnished with pine nuts.

5. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on the following page.



Silky Smooth

Blend 2-3 slices (30g) beef with 3-4 cubes of roasted pumpkin, some spinach leaves and ricotta, adding 1-2 tbsp boiling water if necessary.



Lumpy mushy

Pulse 2-3 slices (30g) beef with spinach leaves until partially smooth and mix with 3-4 pieces of mashed pumpkin and ricotta.



Finger Food

Place some slices of beef cut into smaller pieces, green beans, cubes of pumpkin, and pasta on a plate to eat as finger food.



Toddlers

Place some of the tossed pasta in a small bowl and serve with a fork.



Roast

Lamb & veggy roast with potato wedges

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 mins

Cooking time: 40 mins - 1 hour

Ingredients

500g lamb mini roast, trimmed of fat

2 tbsp olive oil

800g potatoes, peeled, cut into wedges

500g pumpkin, peeled, cut into 2cm pieces

250g cherry tomatoes

2 bunches asparagus, cut into bite size lengths

Method

1. Preheat oven to 200°C. Rub lamb with 2 tsp of oil and brown in a non-stick frying pan over high heat. Place on baking tray lined with baking paper.

2. Toss potatoes and pumpkin in remaining oil and place on another baking tray lined with baking paper. Place wedges on one side and pumpkin on the other. Bake for 1 hour adding tomatoes and asparagus for the last 15 mins of cooking.
3. Meanwhile bake browned lamb for 20-25 mins. Remove from oven when cooked, while potatoes and vegetables finish cooking. Loosely cover lamb with foil and rest lamb for 10 mins before carving.
4. Carve lamb into thin slices. Serve with wedges and roasted vegetables.
5. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on the following page.



Silky Smooth

Blend a slice of lamb (30g), 1 potato wedge and 1 piece pumpkin, adding 1 tbsp boiling water if necessary.



Lumpy mushy

Pulse a slice of lamb (30g) in blender with 1 tbsp of boiling water until partially smooth. With a fork mash 1 potato wedge and 2 pieces pumpkin. Combine with blended lamb.



Finger Food

Cut a slice of lamb into thin strips. Cut 3 potato wedges and some vegetables into pieces for small fingers.



Toddlers

Cut potato into mini wedges. Cut lamb into strips and roll around asparagus tips and sliced pumpkin into wheels. Serve with halves of the roasted cherry tomatoes. (Remove skin if preferred).



Beef & Sweet Potato Pie

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 mins

Cooking time: 2 hours

Ingredients

- 600g beef chuck steak, trimmed of fat, diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped into 2cm pieces
- 1 carrot, peeled and cut into 2cm pieces
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 400g can diced tomatoes (no added salt)
- 750ml beef stock, (salt reduced)

Sweet Potato topping

- 700g sweet potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 cups beef stock, (salt reduced)
- ¼ bunch parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp margarine spread, melted
- Steamed broccoli and green peas to serve

Method

1. Heat oil in a large heavy based oven ready casserole pot over a medium heat. Brown the meat in two batches and set aside. Add onion, celery and garlic and cook for 3 minutes. Add canned tomatoes and simmer for 8 minutes until reduced slightly and thick.
2. Return beef to the pot, add 750ml stock and bring to the boil. Reduce heat and gently simmer for 1 ½ hours. Then add carrot and cover with the lid to cook for a further ½ hour.
3. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 220°C and place sweet potato slices in a saucepan with 2 cups stock and parsley. Bring to the boil and cook for 10-15 minutes.
4. Drain stock and layer potatoes evenly over the top of the meat casserole, brush with melted margarine. Place in the oven and bake for 20 minutes or until top is golden.
5. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on the following page.



Adult Meal

Silky Smooth

Blend ¼ cup casserole with juices and ¼ cup of the sweet potato topping until smooth. Serve with a spoonful of pureed broccoli and peas.



Lumpy mushy

Pulse 1/3 cup casserole with juices and 1/3 cup of the sweet potato topping in a blender until partially smooth or mash with a fork. Serve with a spoonful of fork mashed broccoli and peas.



Finger Food

Put ½ cup of casserole on a plate with the sweet potato topping. Surround with a couple of broccoli stems and green peas.



Toddlers

Spoon ¾ cup of casserole into a small bowl and top with sweet potato topping. Surround with broccoli stems and green peas and encourage your toddler to eat with a fork.



Mince

Beef & sweet potato burgers

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 10 mins

Cooking time: 20 mins

Ingredients

350g orange sweet potato, peeled, cut into 2cm pieces

1 garlic clove, crushed

400g lean beef mince

2 tsp chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 zucchini, grated and excess water squeezed out

1 egg lightly beaten

2 tbsp olive oil

4 mixed grain rolls

1 avocado, sliced

Serving suggestion

Sliced tomato, lettuce leaves and sliced red onion.

Method

1. Steam or boil sweet potato until tender. Mash. Combine with garlic, beef mince, parsley, zucchini and egg. Form into 4 patties.
2. Heat large non-stick frying pan. Add oil and heat. Cook patties over medium heat for 4-5 mins on each side or until cooked. Keep warm.
3. Halve the rolls and toast. Top one half with lettuce, burgers, onion and tomato. Top other half with sliced avocado.
4. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on the following page.



Silky Smooth

Blend 1/2 patty with 1 tbsp boiled water until smooth. Serve with 2 tbsp of mashed avocado.



Lumpy mushy

Fork mash 1 patty and 2 tbsp of mashed avocado.



Finger Food

Make 2-3 mini burger patties for little fingers to pick up. Serve with 1 tbsp of grated carrot, 2 quartered cherry tomatoes and 2 cucumber slices. Spread 4 baby squares of bread with a tbsp mashed avocado.



Toddlers

Make 3-4 mini burger patties. Place on top of toasted rounds or squares of sliced bread, topped with a slice of baby tomato. Top 3 toasted rounds of bread with sliced avocado. Serve with cooked carrot sticks.



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