

# Feeding Infants (birth to 12 months)

## HOW TO FEED

Your infant is the best judge of how much food they need, and it is normal for an infant's appetite to vary greatly from day to day. Feed your infant when they show hunger cues and stop feeding your infant when they show fullness cues:

### Hunger cues:

- Putting fists in mouth
- Rooting (when an infant opens his or her mouth and moves it toward objects)
- Excited arm and leg movements
- Sucking or smacking lips
- Crying (this is a *late* hunger cue - try to feed your infant before they get upset)

### Fullness cues:

- Clamping lips together
- Turning head away
- Spitting out nipple
- Pushing away bottle
- Decreased or stopped sucking
- Dribbling out of the corner of mouth



**Ignoring fullness cues may cause children to lose the ability to tell when they are hungry or full and lead to overeating. These tips can help your infant grow up to be a healthy eater!**

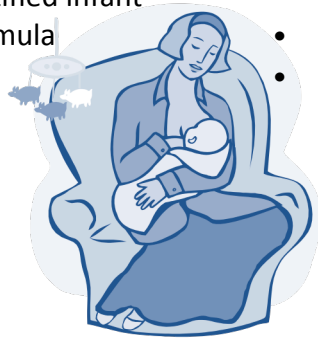
- Never restrict infants to a meal schedule! Instead, feed them when they show hunger cues.
- Let infants eat *their way* – fast, slow, steady, start-and-stop, much, or little.
- Never force an infant to keep eating after they are full! Instead, stop feeding them when they show fullness cues.
- Start with small amounts and go back for more if your infant is still hungry. This helps avoid waste while honoring your infant's hunger and fullness cues.

For more information visit us at <https://5210.psu.edu> or email at [5210@psu.edu](mailto:5210@psu.edu).

# WHAT TO FEED

The foods infants need change as they grow and develop:

Before 6 months		From 6 to 12 months	
YES	NOT YET	YES	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human milk or iron-fortified infant formula</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water</li> <li>Juice</li> <li>Cow's milk</li> <li>Solid foods (unless directed by a doctor)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human milk or iron-fortified infant formula</li> <li>Small amounts of water</li> <li>Appropriate solid foods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Juice</li> <li>Cow's milk</li> <li>Honey</li> <li>Choking hazards (e.g., nuts, grapes, candies)</li> </ul>



Before 6 months the normal food for infants is human milk. Infants who are not breastfed should be given iron-fortified infant formula. Infant tummies are not mature enough for other foods and beverages. Unless directed by a doctor, you should wait until your infant is 6 months old, and has reached the developmental milestones described to the right, before feeding solid foods.

Infants should continue to drink human milk until 12 months or longer. Infants who are not breastfed should be given iron-fortified infant formula. After 6 months infants are ready for solid foods when they can sit in a feeding chair and maintain good head control, seem interested and eager to try solid foods, and can move food from a spoon into the throat. Be careful to avoid choking hazards!

- Introduce one single-ingredient food at a time and if your infant has an allergic reaction, stop feeding that food.
- Offer a variety of nutrient-dense foods such as fortified infant cereals and pureed fruits, vegetables, grains, poultry, and meats. Mix these foods with breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula to thin their consistency. Do not add salt or sweeteners.
- It may take up to 10-15 exposures to a new food before an infant accepts it – so keep trying!

For more information visit us at <https://5210.psu.edu> or email at [5210@psu.edu](mailto:5210@psu.edu).

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012). Policy statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, 129(3) e827-e841.

American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *Infant – Food and Feeding*. Retrieved from <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/HALF-Implementation-Guide/Age-Specific-Content/Pages/Infant-Food-and-Feeding.aspx>

Birch, L. L. & Marlin, D. W. (1982). I don't like it; I never tried it: Effects of exposure on two-year-old children's food preferences. *Appetite*, 3(4), 353-360.

Hurley, K. M., Cross, M. B., & Hughes, S. O. (2011). A systematic review of responsive feeding and child obesity in high-income countries. *Journal of Nutrition*, 141(3), 495-501.

Satter, E. (1995). Feeding dynamics: Helping children to eat well. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 9(4), 178-184.



This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Family Policy, Children and Youth, U.S. Department of Defense under Award No. 2010-48709-21867 developed in collaboration with The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State University. 5210 Healthy Children is adapted from Let's Go! [www.letsgo.org](http://www.letsgo.org).