

# SESSION 1



## Feeding and playing with your 3-6 month old baby



# About this booklet

This booklet supports Session 1 of the INFANT program.

INFANT is a group program about nutrition and play, led by a nurse, health or early years practitioner. It is for parents and caregivers with babies 0-12 months old. Four group sessions are offered when babies are around 3, 6, 9 and 12 months old.



## Acknowledgements

This resource is part of the INFANT program, led by the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), Deakin University.

The development of this resource was gratefully supported by funding from the Victorian Department of Health.

### **Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians**

In the spirit of reconciliation, the INFANT team acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. The INFANT team at Deakin University is based on the land of the Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people.





# Topics in this booklet

Page Number

How to know when your baby is hungry and full.....3

What to feed your 3-6 month old baby.....5

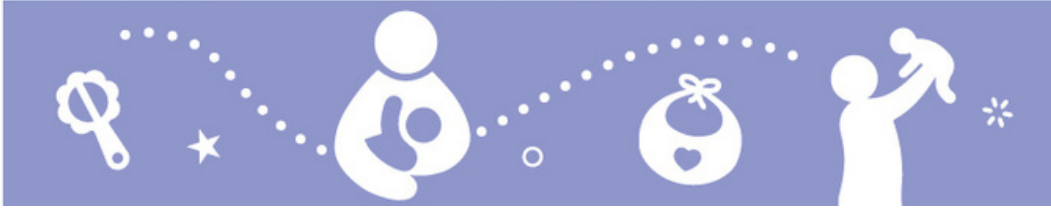
When to start giving your baby solid food.....7

Ways to be active and play with your baby.....9

Summary.....11

Useful links.....12

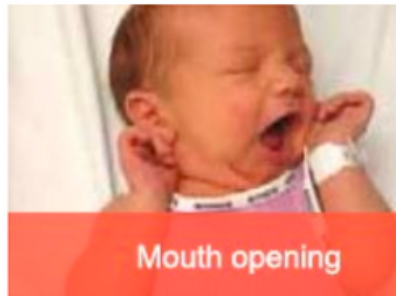
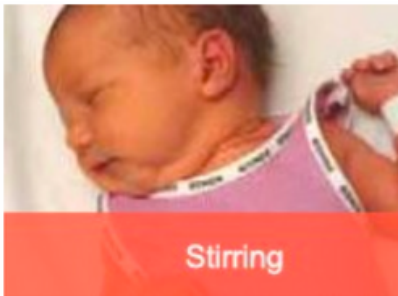
## Feeding is a learning curve



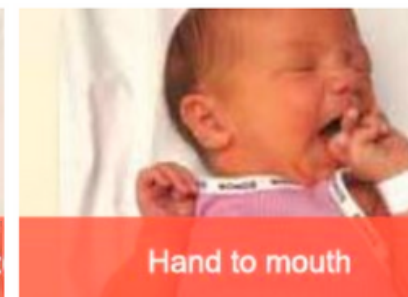
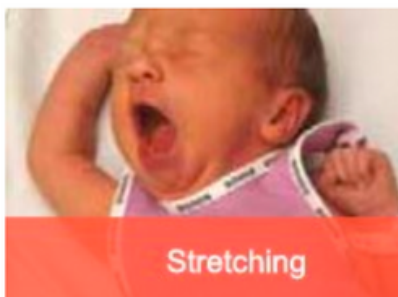
## How to know when your baby is hungry and full

### Early signs of hunger - "Feed me, I'm hungry"

(It is best to feed your baby when you see these signs)

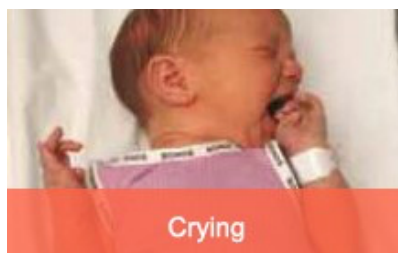


### Active signs of hunger - "Feed me, I'm really hungry"



### Late signs of hunger - "Calm me, then feed me"

(When you see these signs, first calm your baby then feed them. Calm your baby with cuddles, stroking and talking)



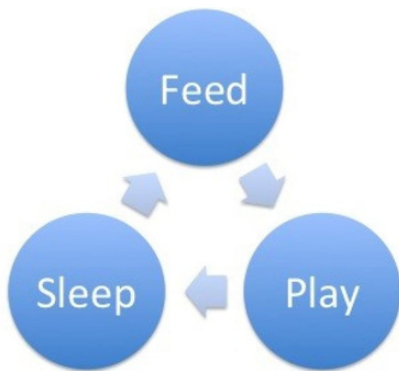


## Some signs that your baby feels full:

- They stop sucking
- They close their mouth
- They turn away from your breast or the bottle

This is a good time to burp your baby. Then wait a minute to offer the breast or bottle again. If your baby shows the same signs as above, they are full.

It is normal if you don't notice all these signs straight away. It can take time to learn.



You might want to follow the **feed, play, sleep pattern** to help you keep track of your baby's eating and sleeping.

It is ok if another way works better for you and your baby. Every baby is different.



The **feed, play, sleep pattern** is a guide to follow with your baby. It means that your baby:

- eats when they wake up,
- plays,
- then sleeps again.

The pattern is repeated over the day.

## What to feed your 3-6 month old baby

Until your baby is 6 months old, **breastmilk and/or baby formula is all they need**. It has everything your baby needs to stay strong and healthy.

You can feed your baby:

- Breastmilk (from the breast or from a bottle)  
And/or
- Baby formula



**If your baby is less than 6 months old, they only need breast or formula milk. They do not need any other food or drinks.**



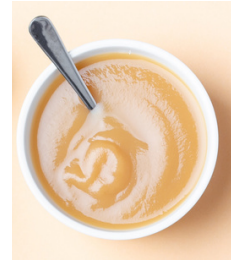
*Juice, cordial  
and soft drink*



*Tea and coffee*



*Animal and  
plant-based milks*



*Baby food*



**Breast milk is the natural food for your baby. Any breastfeeding is good for you and your baby. Breast milk is important for your baby's health no matter how long you breastfeed for.**



## Some signs that your baby is ready to eat solid foods (at around 6 months old, not before 4 months):

- They can hold their head up
- They can sit up with your help or in a seat
- They reach for your food
- They are interested in your food
- They still show hunger signs after having breastmilk or formula
- They make biting movements with mouth
- They no longer stick their tongue out when food is put in their mouth



*This baby can hold his head up and can sit up with some help.*



*This baby is showing an interest in food.*

## Wait until your baby is 6 months old or shows all of these signs before starting solid foods.

This will help to keep your baby safe from choking. It will also help them to get everything they need from breastmilk and/or formula.



**Solid food** is any food that is not liquid. It is the food that you eat every day, like vegetables, fruits, bread, meat or cheese. Make sure these foods are mashed or soft for your baby to eat.



## When to start giving your baby solid food

Your baby will probably be ready to eat **solid food** when they are **around 6 months old**.

Some babies might be ready a bit earlier than 6 months old if they are showing all the signs listed on the previous page. But they should not start before they are 4 months old.

**Your baby's first solid foods should be high in iron.**



**Iron** is in some foods and is important for your baby's growth and energy.

Example high iron foods:



*Well-cooked or canned lentils, chickpeas or kidney beans*



*Soft tofu or mashed hard tofu*



*High iron cereal (with breastmilk or formula)*



*Eggs*



*Cooked minced meat*



*Cooked fish (without bones, soft)*



## Colour every meal with veg & fruit



**Then give your baby other foods like vegetables and fruit. Start with vegetables before giving fruits.**

Try to provide different coloured vegetables and fruits at every meal. It may take up to 10-15 tries before your child learns to like vegetables, don't give up.

**Keep your baby safe from choking - only give them soft food. Cook hard vegetables and fruits until they are soft.**

You can serve soft foods such as:

### **Smooth**

(blended food with no lumps)



or

### **Mashed**

(blended foods with some lumps)



or

### **Long, thin slices**

that are safe for your baby to eat with their fingers



**Always watch your baby while they are eating to make sure they do not choke.** To learn more about choking and first aid, follow the 'Choking first aid' link on page 12.



## Off and running



## Ways to be active and play with your 3-6 month old baby

Aim for 30 minutes of **tummy time** every day.



**Tummy time** is when baby spends some time on their stomach in a safe space (e.g. on your tummy/chest or on the floor). It is great for your baby's muscles and growth.



**You don't have to do 30 minutes all at the same time.**

It can be broken up into shorter blocks over the day (e.g. 6 x 5 minutes throughout the day = 30 minutes in total).

Start with just a minute or two at a time and increasing as your baby gets used to it.

**Laying baby on your chest counts as tummy time too!**

You can **put some toys or a mirror in front of your baby** to make tummy time more fun for them.



**Never do tummy time when baby is asleep or while eating. Always supervise baby when doing tummy time to keep your baby safe.**





## **Play with your baby often.**

Play time helps your baby's brain and muscles to grow strong. It also helps your baby to trust and feel connected to you.

## **Take your baby for a walk in the pram.**

Let your baby see different things outside. It is great for you to get fresh air and be active too.



## **Play with bubbles.**

Your baby is learning to grab and touch things. They will have fun trying to touch the bubbles!

## **Play with toys together.**

Put a toy or ball just outside of your baby's reach, so they have to move and stretch to get to it. This helps their muscles to develop and grow.



## **Avoid phones, TV and other screens.**

Screens are not recommended at any time for children under 2 and can delay your baby's development. The blue light and stimulation from screens can also make it hard to settle a baby to sleep.



### **Avoid using your phone, TV or other screens at mealtime and when playing together.**

This will help your baby learn more from you and feel more connected to you.

# Summary

## Feeding and playing with your 3-6 month old baby

- It is best to feed your baby when you see early signs of hunger: Stirring, mouth opening and turning head.
- Start giving your baby **solid foods** at around 6 months, when they show **all** the signs that they are ready.
- **Breastmilk and/or formula is still the most important food** for your baby until they are 12 months old.
- Your baby's first solid foods should have lots of **iron** (e.g. Iron-rich cereal, soft or blended meat, poultry and fish, lentils and other legumes, tofu and eggs).
- Along with these iron-rich foods, offer your baby other healthy foods, starting with vegetables, then fruit
- 30 minutes of **tummy time** every day is great for your baby's muscles and growth.
- **Play with your baby often** (e.g. play with balls, with bubbles or go for a walk outside!)
- Keep play and meal times **screen free** so you and your baby can focus on connecting and learning together

# Useful links

## For more information about feeding and playing with your baby:



### My Baby Now app

The My Baby Now app is full of practical advice, tips and tools to help you feed your baby, and lots of ideas for play! Developed by experts, it is information you can trust.

Scan the QR code to download to your phone:



## For information about other popular topics for parents of babies aged 3-6 months:

### Choking first aid

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/safety/choking-strangulation/choking-first-aid-pictures>

### Allergies

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/health-daily-care/allergy-intolerance>

### Sleep

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/sleep>

### Development

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/newborns/development/understanding-development/baby-development>