

# SESSION 2



## Feeding and playing with your 6-9 month old baby



# About this booklet

This booklet supports Session 2 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 baby is around 3, 6, 9 and 12 months old.



## Acknowledgements

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### **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.



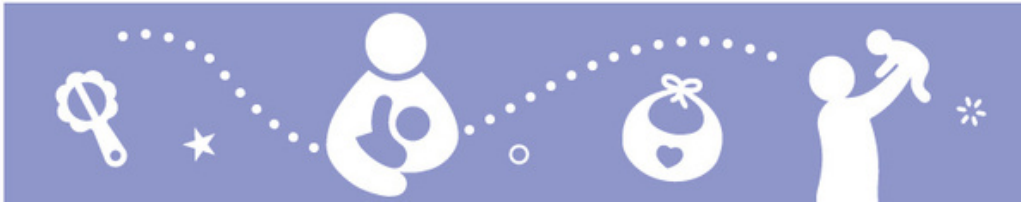
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## Feeding is a learning curve



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

### Some signs that your baby may be hungry:

- They reach for your food
- They open their mouth when you give them food
- They get excited when they see food



*These babies are hungry. They are excited when they see food*

### Some signs that your baby feels full:

- They push food away
- They keep their mouth closed when you give them food
- They turn their head away when you give them food



## 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 signs that your baby is ready to start solid foods:

- They can hold their head up
- They can sit up in a seat
- They reach for your food
- They no longer stick their tongue out when food is put in their mouth

Find out more in the **INFANT Session 1 booklet** on **page 7**



### It is normal if your baby does not eat much solid food at first.

Keep offering your baby lots of different foods to try, even if they don't seem to like them.

Babies often need to try a new food 10-15 times before they learn to like them!



## Colour every meal with veg & fruit



## What to feed your baby

To help your baby grow strong and healthy, start to give them **solid food** from around 6 months old. Continue giving breastmilk and/or formula too.



**Solid food** is any food that is not liquid. It is the food that you eat every day, like vegetables, fruits, rice, meat or cheese. Make sure these foods are mashed or soft for your baby to eat (see page 7).



**Give your baby solid foods that have lots of iron.**



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

Some examples of high iron foods:



*Cooked minced meat*



*Well-cooked or canned lentils, chickpeas or kidney beans (mashed)*



*Soft tofu (cut into long thin slices) or mashed hard tofu*



*High iron cereal (with breastmilk or formula)*

**Then give your baby other foods like vegetables and fruit.**

Over the week, offer your baby lots of different foods, and let them decide if and how much to eat. This will help your baby learn to enjoy different foods and eat delicious healthy foods later in life.



## Give your baby certain foods to lower their chance of having a food allergy.

You should start introducing common foods that people's bodies react to (have an allergy to) when you start giving your baby solid food around 6 months old. Try to introduce all of these foods before 12 months old.

Examples of common foods that people's bodies react to (have an allergy to) that you should introduce are:



*Peanut butter (and other nut butters)*



*Egg*



*Cheese and other dairy foods*



*Prawns and other shellfish*

Only give your baby one of these foods per day. **Start with very small amounts** and watch your baby closely for a rash or sickness.

### **If your baby does not get a rash or sickness:**

Continue to add this food into some of your baby's meals in small amounts. Make the amount a little bit bigger each time.

### **If your baby does get a rash or sickness:**

Stop giving your baby the food and go to your doctor.





*These babies have a rash from eating an allergy food and should go to the doctor.*





You can learn more about **introducing common foods** to your baby through the 'Allergies' link on the Useful Links page (page 18).

# Keep your 6-9 month old baby safe from choking - only give them soft food.

 <p>Whole nuts and seeds (instead you can give smooth nut butter)</p>	 <p>Hard foods (e.g. raw apple, raw carrot or hard lollies)</p>	 <p>Sticky foods (e.g. marshmallows and other sticky lollies)</p>	 <p>Round foods (e.g. whole grapes* and popcorn) *Slice grapes into quarters to make them safe.</p>
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**A food is soft enough for your baby to eat if it is easy to squash between your fingers.** Grate or cook hard vegetables and fruits until they are soft.

Example:

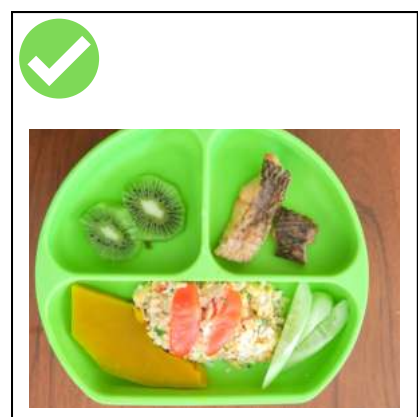
 <p>No hard vegetables/fruits</p>	 <p>Grated carrot is safer for your baby</p>	 <p>Cooked, soft carrot is safer for your baby</p>
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You can serve **soft foods** as:

**Mashed**



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 17.





## Foods to avoid giving your 6-9 month old baby

**There are some foods that should be avoided until your baby is 12 months old.**

Your baby's body is not ready for these foods:



*Raw egg and honey (can cause infection in babies before 12 months old)*



*All milks including animal (e.g. cow, goat) and plant-based (e.g. soy, rice, oat, nut milks) should be avoided until 12 months of age. (small amounts in cooking is ok)*



*Added sugar, salt and other additives*

**There are other foods that you should not give to your baby too often.**

Some foods do not give your baby what they need to grow strong and healthy. You should not give these foods to your baby every day. These foods are called **sometimes foods**.

Some examples of **sometimes foods** are:



*Chocolate*



*Cookies or biscuits*



*Chips or fries*

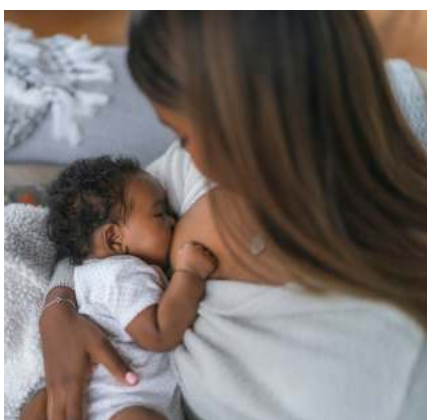
## What to give your baby to drink

Keep giving your 6-9 month old baby:

- breastmilk (from the breast or from a bottle)
- and/or formula milk

until they are at least 12 months old.

This helps your baby stay healthy and strong.



*Breastmilk can be given through breastfeeding or from a bottle.*

and/or



*Baby formula from a bottle*

**Before your baby is 8 months old, you can feed them breastmilk and/or formula first, then offer solid food after.**

After your baby is 8 months old, offer solid food first to help your baby to not get too full from breast and/or formula milk.



Your baby will need less breast milk and/or formula when they start eating solid foods. But **breast and/or formula milk is still the most important food** for them until they are 12 months old. It will help your baby stay healthy and grow strong.

## Tap in to water



### Give small amounts of water to your baby from 6 months old.

Boil water from the tap and let it cool, then give it your baby. This makes it safe for your baby because it is free from germs that might make your baby sick.



#### How to prepare tap water for your baby:

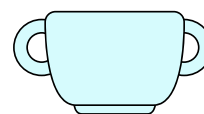
- Heat tap water in a kettle or on the stove until it is boiling



- Leave water to cool down in a safe place away from your baby (e.g. on your kitchen bench away from the edge)



- Check water is cool
- Give it to your baby to drink in a sippy cup



### Your baby does not need any other drinks.

Juice, cordial  
and soft drinks



Animal and  
plant-based milks



Tea and coffee





## From 6 months old, babies can learn to drink from a cup.

If your baby drinks their water, breastmilk and/or formula from a bottle, aim to stop using the bottle by the time they are 12 months old. Instead, you can give them a cup.

Drinking from a cup is an important skill and is better for your baby's teeth. Using a cup helps your baby learn how to move their mouth and tongue, which is important for learning to talk!



*Straw cup*



*Sippy cup*



*Open cup*

You can start with a **straw cup** or **sippy cup** to help your baby learn how to sip.

You can move on to an **open cup** as soon as possible.



**It is normal if your baby can't use a cup straight away. Drinking from a cup is a learned skill.** Keep practising!

## Eat together, play together



### How to show your baby healthy habits

#### **Our babies watch and learn from everything we do.**

Show your baby healthy habits like eating delicious healthy foods, and being active together.

Try to show your baby good examples of healthy habits like:

- eating lots of vegetables and fruit
- moving your body and being active
- not using your phone too often.



#### **Enjoy mealtimes together as a family.**

Give your baby the same foods that you are eating (remember to mash or slice so they are safe for your baby to eat). Your baby will be more likely to eat different foods to stay healthy and strong.

#### **You can help your baby to enjoy mealtime by letting them:**

- touch their food with their hands (it's ok to get a bit messy!)
- decide if and how much to eat
- try to use a spoon on their own (this will help them learn to eat on their own as they get older)



## Off and running



### How to help your 6-9 month old baby to move more

#### Play with your baby often.

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

Set up a safe space, like the floor or your lap, where you and your baby can play together.



#### Give your baby lots of time to move their body.

Try to avoid putting your baby in the highchair, pram, activity centre, play chairs, or bouncer to play, or anywhere else that stops them moving around freely.



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

Screens are not recommended for children under 2 years old. They can delay your baby's brain and body development.

The blue light and excitement from screens can also make it hard to settle a baby to sleep.



## Ways to be active and play with your 6-9 month old baby

### Listen and move to music together.

This helps your baby move their body and have fun!



### Play with blocks or plastic cups.

Put blocks or plastic cups in a basket and let your baby take them out and put them back in again! Your baby will have fun and will build strong muscles in their hands.

### Play at the playground.

This is a great way to get some fresh air and bond with your baby. Always supervise your baby on the equipment.



### Play with toys with wheels.

Play with you baby with toys that have wheels (like toy cars or pull-along toys). This teaches them about movement and encourages them to move too!

## Parents provide, kids decide



### How to help your 6-9 month old baby to learn

Letting your baby **make their own choices** helps them to learn. It also helps them understand how to make decisions when they are older.

- Give your baby different options for play. Let them decide how they want to play.



- Give your baby different healthy food options. Let them decide if and how much to eat.



# Summary

## Feeding and playing with your 6-9 month old baby

- Start giving your baby **solid foods** at around 6 months. **Breastmilk and/or formula is still the most important food** for your baby until they are 12 months old.
- Give your baby solid foods that have lots of iron (e.g. Iron-rich cereal, soft or blended meat, poultry and fish, lentils and other legumes, tofu and eggs).
- Include **vegetables and fruits** in every meal
- Make **mealtimes fun and happy** by providing healthy options and letting your baby decide how much to eat.
- **Your baby is watching you and learning from you all the time.** For example, when you eat vegetables or you dance and play, your baby will want to try too!
- **Play with your baby often** (e.g. with blocks, at the playground or dancing together!)
- Keep play and meal times **screen free** so you and your baby can focus on connecting and learning together.
- Set up an area where your baby can safely play and **move freely** on the floor; avoid putting your baby in a highchair, pram or activity centre to play.



## 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 6-9 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>

#### **Dental care**

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

#### **Talking and play**

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/play-learning/play-baby-development/talking-play-babies>