

# Nutrition for children under 1 – from breastfeeding to family meals



## Breastfeeding

- For the first 6 months, breast milk is all you need to feed your baby, other than vitamin D supplement.
- Breast milk contains ingredients that contribute to the development of the child's immune system and gut microbiome. Breastfeeding also bolsters the mother's health and recovery from childbirth.
- The baby is breastfed according to the child's hunger and satiety cues. This promotes interaction between mother and child from the earliest possible moment.
- Sometimes the baby will breastfeed more frequently for a few days, resulting in the amount of breast milk increasing to meet the baby's needs.
- In the early weeks, it is important to breastfeed frequently, including at night, to allow breast milk production to ramp up. This means breastfeeding about 8–12 times a day. Breastfeeding intervals vary from individual to individual.
- Full breastfeeding is recommended until 4-6 months of age and breastfeeding alongside solid foods until one year of age, and even longer if desired.

## Infant formula, follow-on formula, and other drinks

- Infant formula is used to supplement or replace breast milk until 6 months of age, if necessary, and then follow-on formula until 1 year of age.
- Cow's milk and plant-based analogues are not suitable for children under 1 year of age, as they do not meet the nutritional needs of an infant.
- A breastfed child does not usually need extra water. In the diet of a child under one year of age, there is no need for any juice.

## Use of vitamin D supplementation

Vitamin D supplementation 10 µg daily from 2 weeks of age. The amount of the supplement is reduced if the child receives more than 500 ml of infant formula per day.



# Starting solid foods

## From 4-6 months of age

- Tasting of solid foods should begin at around 4–6 months of age, depending on individual development. A child is ready to start to try solid foods when they can sit in a supported position, control their head movements, coordinate their gaze, and reach for food with their hand.
- The first tasting portions of solid foods (from a teaspoonful to a few teaspoons) should be offered after breastfeeding or formula feeding so that they do not crowd out breastfeeding or formula feeding.
- For exclusively breastfed babies, giving solid foods at 4–6 months of age together with breast milk helps the gut to mature and develop tolerance to new foods.
- If a 4-month-old breastfed child needs complementary feeding, it is better to start with solid foods rather than switch to formula, in order to maintain breast milk secretion and partial breastfeeding.
- If the baby is not breastfed at all, it is recommended that tasting solid food be started at around 4 months of age, taking into account individual development.

## From 6 months of age

- From the age of six months, your child needs solid foods to ensure their growth and development, and the size of the portions they can taste should gradually be increased until they eat entire pureed meals. At this time, breast milk or follow-on formula should only be offered after solid food.
- The child will participate in family meals by sampling the foods that suit them, which gives the child a natural introduction to the family's tastes in food as well as a cadence of meals. Meals should be verbalised to the child through naming the foods and talking about food.
- The food purees should gradually become more granular in texture at pace with the child's individual oral motor development. Finger foods and the use of a mug develop the child's ability to pinch and to eat out of their hand. Closer to the age of one, your child will move on to eating food that is essentially the same texture as the rest of the family, and chopping or mincing the food on the plate will suffice.
- Children may be naturally averse to new flavours, especially bitter and acidic ones such as those found in vegetables. It may take 10–15 tries for your child to get used to a new taste.

# Foods suitable for the diet of a child under 1 year old

## From 4 months of age

- **Potatoes and vegetables:** potatoes, carrots, cauliflower, bell peppers, broccoli, corn, Brussels sprouts, cucumber, zucchini, parsnips, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, swedes, turnips, frozen vegetables as applicable.
- **Berries and fruits:** strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, currants, gooseberries, cloudberries, cranberries, lingonberries, rose hips, apples, bananas, plums, pears, pineapples, kiwifruit, peaches, apricots, citrus fruits, melons, mangoes.

## From 5 months of age

- **Cereal products:** oats, rye, barley, wheat, spelt, rice, buckwheat, maize, millet, preferring wholemeal in each case.
- Unseasoned chicken, turkey, pork, beef, sheep, reindeer, elk, other game, fish (vendace, coalfish, whitefish, farmed rainbow trout, and Norwegian salmon), eggs.
  - Initially ground, about 1 teaspoon per dose of puree during the initial tasting and about 1–1.5 tablespoons later.

## From 6 months of age

- **Legumes and vegetable protein products:** peas, lentils, beans, tofu, and other vegetable protein products without added salt.
- **Nuts and almonds,** unsweetened, unsalted, and not glazed. Grind these or serve them as a paste to infants and young children to prevent inhalation. They can be used in small amounts, for example, mixed with a baby's vegetable puree.

## From 10 months of age

- **Milk and dairy products:** non-fat or low-fat (fat  $\leq$  1 %): unflavoured buttermilk, yoghurt, buttermilk, curd, milk for cooking.
- **Soya, oat, or other plant-based drinks, and yoghurt-like soya or oat products,** fortified with calcium and vitamins D, B2 and B12, with no added sugar. Rice milk is not recommended as the sole beverage at mealtimes for children under six years of age.
- **Non-fat milk or plant-based drinks** can be consumed with food once closer to one year of age.

Breast milk, infant formula or follow-on formula will ensure an adequate fat intake for children under 1 year of age. If necessary, canola or rapeseed oil can be added to your child's mashed food or porridge.

# Foods and foodstuffs to avoid in the diet of children under 1 year old

- Sausages, wieners, cold cuts (salt, nitrite)
- All juices and juice drinks (habituation to sweet drinks, dental health)
- Honey (risk of Clostridium botulinum bacteria)
- Cassia cinnamon (high coumarin content), Ceylon cinnamon is fine
- Nitrate-accumulating vegetables; beetroot, various types of lettuce, Chinese cabbage, kale, collard greens, spinach, pumpkin (not including courgettes), radish, celery, fennel, fresh herbs, sprouts (high nitrate content, sprouts also pose a risk of EHEC and salmonella)
- Raw and unpasteurised milk and cheeses made out of unpasteurised milk (risk of listeria, salmonella, EHEC, etc.)
- Liver dishes (high vitamin A content)
- Oilseeds, e.g. flax and sunflower seeds (heavy metals)
- Brazil nuts (high selenium content)
- Early potatoes (in the early summer, high levels of solanine and/or nitrate may be found in potato tubers)
- False morel (residual toxicity may remain in spite of treatment)
- Raw cereal/seed porridge, i.e. porridge prepared by soaking overnight at room temperature (may have poor hygienic quality)
- Seaweed products (excess iodine content, heavy metals)
- Herbal preparations, herbal tea drinks (natural contaminants)

## Also note

- Frozen berries of non-Finnish origin should be heated to 90 degrees Celsius for 5 minutes or boiled for 2 minutes before use (risk of Norovirus and Hepatitis A virus).
- Serve fish, meat and chicken well cooked and unsalted, no gravad or cold-smoked fish (risk of listeria and salmonella, salt).
- There are no restrictions on the amount of freshwater roach or farmed fish that may be consumed.
- Fish, including wild salmon, trout, lamprey, or large specimens of Baltic herring (more than 19 cm in length before being gutted), caught in the Baltic Sea can be consumed once every two months.
- Pikeperch, bream, whitefish, perch, or pike caught in fresh water can be served once a week, and freshwater vendace twice a month.

Avoid foods high in sugar or salt in the diet of a child under one year of age. Non-salty spices (e.g. dried herbs, peppers) can be increased gradually.

Updated 6/2025