

Advice – Recommendations

## Infants aged 6-12 months

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## Feeding of the Infant

### Breastfeeding and Infant Formula

Milk is the infant's main source of energy and hydration during the second half of the first year of life. In case that you wish to continue breastfeeding, it is likely that administration of vitamins A and D to the infant will be necessary. Vitamin D is produced during exposure to sunlight, therefore, infants often have vitamin D deficiency. If breastfeeding does not continue, choose one of the commercial infant formulas appropriate for infants aged 6-12 months (rather than fresh cow's milk). These products meet the specifications of the Commission of the European Community (European Directive 2006/141/22-12-2006) regarding their content of macro- and micronutrients (low protein content and high content of vitamins and trace elements, such as vitamins A and D, iron, calcium, and polyunsaturated fatty acids).

### Solid food introduction

According to the European Society of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition, the introduction of solid foods should be achieved in all infants by 26<sup>th</sup> week of life to meet their nutritional requirements, as the consumption of breast milk or infant formula exclusively is not enough. The introduction of solid foods is not recommended to be done early or late.

The infant is ready to receive solid foods when he/she is able to sit with support, support his/her head well in a sitting position, accept the spoon without pushing it out, and show interest in foods other than milk.

Ideally, the introduction of solid foods should be done while the baby continues to breastfeed, as this reduces the chance of developing allergies. To detect possible allergic reactions, foods should be introduced one at a time.

Infants are born with a preference for sweet and salty tastes and an aversion to bitter and sour tastes. For this reason, it is recommended to avoid eating foods with added sugar or artificial sweeteners and salt. Adopting healthy eating habits should start at this age, therefore, it is important to encourage repeated exposure of infants to healthy food choices, such as fruits and vegetables.

The introduction of new foods is done gradually, in small quantities, and with each food being introduced with a time gap from the previous one (usually one week). The aim is to replace milk (except for breakfast and dinner) with solid food. Infants consider any food as something foreign, and it takes a lot of effort and patience to accept it. Observe your infant's behavior when trying new foods. If the infant refuses to eat new food, do not force it. Try to give it again after a few days with other food combinations that he/she has already tried and accepted. It takes about 8-10 attempts for an infant to accept a new food.

With the introduction of solid foods, you can also give water. Prefer tap water, which does not need to be boiled. Bottled water is only indicated when tap water is unsafe.

During feeding, the infant is placed in a sitting position and always supervised, as there is a risk of choking, which depends on the infant's developed swallowing and chewing skills and the texture of the food offered.

As the infant grows, the texture of the foods you offer should be adjusted, with ground foods gradually being replaced by chopped foods and then by small pieces that the child can grasp and eat on their own (as you can see in the following images).



### **Ensuring hygiene conditions**

Avoid sharing utensils (spoons) between you and the infant during feeding (e.g., avoid tasting the food first and then offering it to the infant with the same spoon). Infants do not yet have a strong immune system and are susceptible to infections, while at the same time this habit reduces the nutritional content of foods.

In order for the food you offer to be safe, it is necessary to:

- Wash your hands very well and clean the surfaces you use thoroughly.
- Wash all the utensils you use very well.
- Wash the infant's face and hands very well, especially when he/she is given food to eat alone.
- Freeze the various foods properly in the refrigerator.
- Cook well any foods that require cooking.
- Refrigerate the infant's meal if it is not consumed immediately.

## Recommended time of introduction of food to infant's diet

Food group	Recommended time of introduction to infant nutrition
<b>Fruits and vegetables</b>	Introduction at the end of the 6 <sup>th</sup> month
<b>Gluten-free grains (Rice flour)</b>	Introduction at the end of the 6 <sup>th</sup> month
<b>Meat (red or white)</b>	Introduction until the end of the 7 <sup>th</sup> month
<b>Grains with gluten</b>	Introduction until the end of the 7 <sup>th</sup> month (ideally while the infant continues to breastfeed)
<b>Eggs and fish</b>	Introduction after the above foods is well-tolerated and before the completion of the 1st year of life
<b>Yogurt and cheese</b>	Introduction after the above foods is well-tolerated and before the completion of the 1st year of life
<b>Fresh milk</b>	Introduction at the end of the 1st year of life

## Recommended food intake by age group

Age	Food	Amount
6-8 months	Breast milk (recommended)	3-5 times/day
	Infant formula	680-900 gr/day
	Grains	4-6 tablespoons/day*
	Fruit puree	3-4 tablespoons/day*
	Vegetables puree†	3-4 tablespoons/day*
	Juices	None
	Meat or chicken or legumes puree	2-4 tablespoons/day*
8-12 months	Breast milk (recommended)	3-4 times/day
	Infant formula	680-900 gr/day
	Grains	4-6 tablespoons/day*
	Fruit puree	6-8 tablespoons/day*
	Vegetables puree†	6-8 tablespoons/day*
	Juices	None
	Meat or chicken or legumes puree	2-3 tablespoons/day

\* Distribution of these amounts into 2 meals during the day

† Addition of olive oil to vegetables for energy enrichment

## Foods to avoid before the 1st year of life

- **Salt and foods containing it.** Avoid salting the infant's meals and/or offering foods with salt (e.g., pasta, packaged foods, lunch meats).
- **Sugar and products containing it.** It is important that sugar is not given to the infant, especially until he/she begins to eat fruits and vegetables. From birth there is a preference for sweet taste, so the consumption of sugar can influence the infant's food choices. In addition, foods rich in sugar are responsible for causing tooth decay and weight gain in case of overconsumption. Therefore, sugar and sweets should be avoided.

- **Honey.** Honey contains the bacterium *Clostridium Botulinum*, which is responsible for a disease called botulism. Honey should not be consumed before the completion of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of life.
- **Tea and other beverages with caffeine.** Black tea and other beverages are not recommended for this age group due to their caffeine content.
- **Other liquids.** The only liquids that the infant can consume are breast milk or infant formula and water. Any other liquid, such as juices, sweetened beverages, nectars and soft drinks, should not be consumed, because they are rich in sugars (thus increasing the chance of tooth decay) and their consumption tends to replace milk or other foods of high nutritional value.

### Physical activity

Include physical activity in your infant to ensure the development of skills and healthy behaviors later in life by:

- Performing activities with the infant to help move the infant's limbs and grasp objects.
- Avoiding the inactivity of the infant for periods exceeding 1 hour, as occurs when placing the infant in child seats or cradles.

### Sleep

The infant's need for sleep averages 14 hours a day and gradually normalizes, as a result of which your rest time also increases.