



# Safe Food for Babies and Children: Introducing Table Foods to Children Ages 8 Months to 1 Year

This handout provides general guidance for adding table foods to your child's diet. The transition from pureed food to table foods may take time. This handout is designed to help with your growing child's diet.

As you transition from pureed foods to table foods, keep these tips in mind:

- Allow a period of time (a few days to a week) with each new food to watch for any allergic reactions. For more information, see the "All About Allergens" series of publications from NDSU Extension.
- Do not give honey to your child until after the first year. Honey may contain spores that could lead to a serious foodborne illness (infant botulism).
- Do not give cows' milk until after your child's first birthday or as your health-care provider recommends.
- If desired, you can provide your child with a baby spoon, but don't be concerned if he or she has trouble using it for a while. Children develop the ability to "pinch" food and put it in their mouth by about 9 months, so eating with their hands is easier for them.

## Introducing New Foods

- Try a variety of tastes, colors and textures.
  - If your baby seems sensitive to new textures, serve food in small portions.
  - Try mixing new foods with foods your baby already likes.
- Serve what the family eats when possible.
  - Fork mash, cut up or grind the food. This helps prevent choking.
  - Consider cooking the food longer until it is very soft.
  - Take out your baby's portion before adding seasonings.
  - Never give your baby bigger pieces of food than he/she can handle safely.
- Allow your child to join in family mealtimes with the high chair near the table.
- Provide water in a sippy cup.
  - At 12 months, you can introduce whole milk in a cup.
- Keep the personality of your child in mind during feeding time.
  - If your child likes a lot of stimulation, try "playing airplane" with the spoon.
  - If your child is more reserved, you may need to try to keep distractions to a minimum.
- Set consistent mealtimes.
  - Encourage your child to eat at the times you have decided.
  - Do not force or pressure your child to eat at a scheduled time if he/she is resistant.



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## Amount of Food to Serve

A child who is growing well is eating enough. Children often drink less formula/breastmilk as they approach their first birthday. This is normal because they are getting more nutrients from their food.

- Offer your child three meals and two snacks a day.
  - Do not be surprised if your infant's eating habits vary from day to day.
- Be sure to provide food from all of the food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, protein foods and dairy).
  - Do not restrict fat-rich foods, such as avocados.
  - Encourage your child to eat a variety of foods. Modeling good eating yourself helps increase children's willingness to eat different foods.
- Serve one-fourth to one-third of your serving portions as a "serving size."
  - Encourage your child to ask for more if he or she still is hungry.
- Pay attention to your child's cues if you feel you are feeding too much or too little.
  - Is your child showing signs of fullness, such as turning away or refusing food?
  - Is your child showing signs of hunger shortly after finishing?

## Additional Resources

- Academy of Pediatrics - [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics - [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) or [www.kidseatright.org](http://www.kidseatright.org)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov)
- NDSU Extension - [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food)

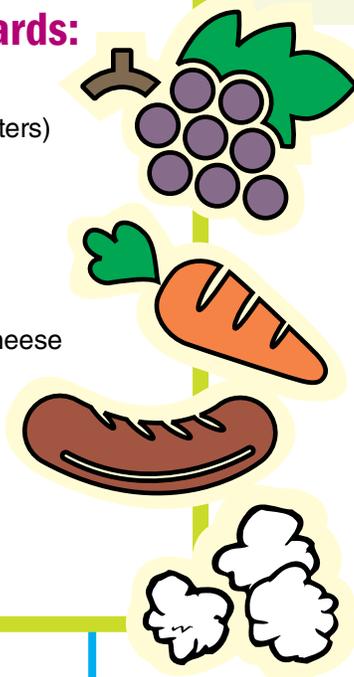
## Warnings

- Never leave your child unattended while eating.
- Make sure your child eats while seated.
- Allow all food to cool long enough to not burn your child's tender mouth.
- Avoid spicy, salted, buttered or sweetened food.
- Ask yourself the following questions if you are unsure if a food is safe:
  - Can it melt in the mouth?
  - Is it cooked to the point that you can mash it easily with your fork?
  - Is it naturally soft, such as cottage cheese?
  - Can it be "gummed" (mashed with the gums), such as a ripe banana?

## Choking Hazards:

- Whole grapes (cut them in quarters)
- Raw vegetables
- Hard fruits
- Raisins
- White bread
- Hard pieces of cheese
- Hot dogs
- Popcorn
- Hard candies
- Whole nuts\*

\*Also a possible allergen



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