

Introducing Solid Foods

Your toddler may be ready for solid foods when all of these are true:

- ✓ they're about 6 months old
- ✓ they can sit and hold their head up
- ✓ they can turn their head away to show you that they're full
- ✓ they try to pick up food and put it in their mouth



HOW TO Introduce solid food

1. Pick a time when your toddler is wide awake and has an appetite but isn't too hungry. Solids can be offered before or after breastfeeding or chestfeeding.
2. Sit them up in a feeding chair, facing you.
3. Eat with your toddler, so they can learn by watching you.
4. Serve your toddler the same foods as the rest of the family (of an appropriate texture), without added sugar or salt.



DID YOU KNOW?

Gagging is normal when learning to eat. When food slips to the back of your toddler's tongue before they're ready to swallow, they'll gag to prevent choking (see [Reducing Choking Hazards](#)). When this happens, stay calm and reassure them. If you panic, they may become afraid to try new foods.

First Foods

Your baby's first foods should be rich in iron – like meat, fish, chicken, eggs, lentils, tofu and iron-fortified baby cereal. Introduce these alongside other family foods, like grains, vegetables and fruit.

Meat, fish or shellfish will be easier for your toddler to eat if it's moist and in tiny pieces. Try:

- mixing small bits with water, human milk, mashed vegetables or gravy to make an even texture
- braising and stewing to keep meats soft enough for your toddler to chew, or shred it up or serve it ground
- using nutrient-rich dark meat rather than white meat chicken

Be sure to take out any bones and shells from fish.

Fully cook pork to an inside temperature of 71°C; ground beef, lamb and veal to 71°C; and game meats to 74°C. Well-done pieces and whole cuts of beef, lamb and veal should be cooked to 77°C. Eggs should be cooked until the yolks are hard (74°C). For poultry and game birds, cook to 74°C for parts and ground meat, and 82°C for whole birds. Fish should be cooked to 70°C (fully cooked fish should flake with a fork). Oysters should be cooked to 90°C, but other shellfish can be cooked to 71°C.

See [Understanding Food Allergies](#) to learn more about the introduction of solid foods and food allergies.



HOW TO Keep homemade baby food safe

- Before and after food preparation, wash counters and utensils with soap and water. Disinfect surfaces and equipment by using 1 teaspoon (5 ml) bleach mixed with 3 cups (750 ml) water. This is especially important after handling and preparing raw meat and fish.
- Throw out worn cutting boards, which can hide germs.
- Put leftovers in the fridge and use within 2 days. Or freeze them and use within 2 months.



HOW TO Use the microwave to safely reheat baby food

- Stir at least once halfway through to ensure even heating.
- Taste the food to ensure it's not too hot before giving it to your child.
- Don't use the microwave to heat bottles. Warm them in hot water instead.
- Only use plastic containers or plastic wrap labelled "microwave safe."
- Don't use damaged, stained or smelly containers.
- Microwaving should only be used for reheating cooked food, not cooking raw food.