

Feeding young children aged over 6 months

FACT

A baby over 6 months needs breast milk and other foods

Up to six months a baby should have ONLY breast milk.

After 6 months breast milk is not enough for a baby to grow well. It needs other foods.

But it is important for a child's growth and health to continue breastfeeding until he/she is *at least 2 years old (unless the mother is HIV positive, see below)*.

Young children need frequent meals

Young children have small stomachs and can only eat small portions at a time. To get enough food to grow well, they need meals frequently.

Young children should have 2-4 meals a day plus 1-2 healthy snacks in between.

Some healthy snacks for young children are: fruits, vegetables, boiled eggs, sour milk, bread, sweet potatoes.

ACT

To give your child a healthy diet from 6 months to 2 years:

- ❖ Continue breastfeeding.
- ❖ Feed a variety of foods.
- ❖ Make staple foods, like porridge, rice, mashed potatoes, the main component of the diet.
- ❖ Feed your child plenty of fresh vegetables (including green leafy vegetables) and fruits. These foods keep your child healthy and protect him/her against illness. Green leafy vegetables and orange/yellow vegetables are especially healthy because they contain vitamin A (see Fact Sheet 6).
- ❖ Feed your child animal foods (e.g. milk, eggs, meat, offal, poultry, fish) **or** legumes (beans, lentils, peas) every day. These foods help your child to grow well.
- ❖ Include a little fat or oil in meals to add energy and to absorb vitamins.
- ❖ You can also add mashed groundnuts and other mashed nuts and seeds to your child's meal. It will add more energy and help the child to grow well.
- ❖ Give your baby clean water whenever he/she is thirsty.

Give more foods as the baby grows

The amount of foods and the number of meals gradually increase with your child's age.

Age 6-7 months

Type of food: Start giving semisolid foods (e.g. plain or fermented porridge, mashed potato).

Gradually add legumes and oilseed flours, mashed vegetables and fruits, a little oil and, when possible, animal foods (e.g. milk, minced meat, eggs, fish flesh).

Continue breastfeeding.

How often: Start with 1-2 teaspoons of semisolid foods twice a day. Gradually increase the amount and raise the frequency to 2-3 meals per day.

Age 8-11 months

Type of food: Start giving small foods which your baby can hold him/herself (e.g. bread, banana).

Continue breastfeeding.

How often: 3 times a day plus 1 healthy snack.

Age 1-3 years

Type of food: Share family meals with your child.

Give the child his/her own bowl or plate to make sure that he/she gets enough food, especially animal foods (meat, fish, eggs) or legumes, and vegetables and fruits.

Continue breastfeeding up to 2 years.

How often: 3-4 times a day plus 1 or 2 healthy snacks.

! Important for breastfeeding HIV-positive mothers:

After 6 months stop breastfeeding quickly (e.g. over 2 days to 3 weeks maximum) and introduce other foods as mentioned above.

Do not combine breastfeeding with other foods (mixed feeding).

OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS

REMEMBER! Wash your hands before preparing your child's food and before feeding your child. Only use clean utensils.

MAKE SURE the meals do not contain bones or hard pieces that might make the child choke.

BE CAREFUL! Do not make meals too spicy or salty. Too much salt is bad for children.

ENCOURAGE young children to eat in a loving way.

CHECK your baby's weight gain and health. Visit the health care centre regularly.