

Guide to Baby Feeding Vegetarian

All babies need good nutrition so they grow and develop normally. Some families choose to feed their baby a vegetarian diet. This can provide baby with a balanced diet, but a little careful planning is required so baby doesn't miss out on important nutrients needed for healthy growth. For more advice, please see your health professional.

Breast milk is the perfect food for baby. Breast milk or infant formula is all baby needs for around the first 6 months.

first foods

Around 6 months (not before 4 months)

Baby holds head up. Shows signs of chewing movements.

Fluids

Breast milk or infant formula is still the most important food. Offer milk BEFORE solids.

Foods

- Cooked: apple, pear, peach (no skins), un-cooked: mashed banana
- Avocado, cooked: kumara, potato, pumpkin, carrot, kamokamo, marrow
- Baby rice cereals
- Cooked rice
- Cooked pureed legumes and lentils
- Suitable Wattie's blue jars, cans and cereals

Texture

Fine smooth, runny or pureed foods.



Tips

Try a new food every 2-4 days. It can take up to 10 tastes before baby may like a new food. Try again in a few days.

stage two

around 7 months onwards

Baby can sit. Starting to bite, may have teeth.

Breast milk or infant formula is still the most important food. Offer milk BEFORE solids.

Add to first foods:

- Melon, plum (no skins, pips)
- Cooked: broccoli, puha, parsnips, cauliflower
- Cooked egg
- Tofu, tempeh
- Cooked pasta and noodles
- Cheese, yoghurt, cottage cheese, custard
- Baby ground cereals, crackers, bread (white or wholemeal)
- Suitable Wattie's red jars, cans and cereals

Thick purees, small soft lumps or mash.



Tips

Try mixed ingredient foods with a range of tastes. Progress towards 3 meals a day.

stage three

around 8 months onwards

Good chewing and biting. Baby is interested in many foods and textures.

Baby should have breast milk or about 600mL formula a day.

Add to first and stage two foods:

- Kiwifruit, orange, pineapple, berry fruit
- Tomatoes, creamed corn, cooked: silverbeet, spinach
- Breakfast cereals (e.g. Baby muesli, porridge)
- Peanut butter (smooth)
- Suitable Wattie's green jars, cans and cereals

Minced, chopped, grated and small finger food.



Tips

Try using a cup for fluids. If extra fluids are needed offer water.

stage four

12 months onwards

Toddler stage. Baby is ready for most family meals.

Breast milk or formula may be continued. Cows' milk may be introduced as a main drink, or try toddler milk. If toddler is drinking soy milk, ensure it is a calcium enriched, full fat variety.

Add to the above foods:

- Honey
- Suitable Wattie's 'Little Kids' canned meals
- By now your baby should be joining in family meals and eating a wide variety of foods

Varied and challenging.



Tips

Offer milk or water between meals.

Sample Menu

for an 8-9 month old baby

Breakfast:

Iron enriched infant cereal, fruit, toast finger. Breast milk or formula

Snack:

Kiwifruit or yoghurt

Lunch:

Mashed baked beans with cooked rice. Half a banana or yoghurt. Breast milk or formula

Snack:

Avocado or peanut butter sandwich

Dinner:

Cooked vegetables e.g. mashed pumpkin, cauliflower & peas, cooked pasta with grated cheese, custard with banana or peach slices

Before bed:

Breast milk or formula

Guide to Baby Feeding Vegetarian

There are several different types of vegetarian diets, but all of them exclude meat. You may still wish to offer your baby foods like milk, cheese, yoghurt, and eggs as these foods can make it easier to provide baby with a balanced diet. A vegan diet is made up of only plant based foods, and this type of diet needs careful planning to ensure baby gets all the important nutrients. See your GP, Plunket Nurse or a Dietitian for further advice.

Getting Started On Solids

Every baby is different and some will reach this stage sooner than others. Some signs your baby may be ready for food (around 6 months):

- seems hungry after a breast or formula feed
- baby's mouth opens easily when spoon touches lip or food approaches and tongue does not protrude
- can hold their head up well
- is interested in watching you eat (e.g. reaching out, opening their mouth when you are eating and putting hands and toys in mouth)

Choose a time when both of you are relaxed.

NOT READY

Tongue protrudes so baby can't take food from spoon. This is called 'extrusion reflex' and disappears sometime after 4 months.



READY

Mouth opening as spoon approaches. Mouth closes as food stays in mouth and is moved to the back of the throat for swallowing.



Very First Solids – What To Offer

Fruits and vegetables that are naturally sweet are good first foods. Baby rice, prepared with breast milk or infant formula, is a familiar flavour and is also readily accepted. Make a very smooth and runny mixture using the milk. Use a small teaspoon and offer a very small amount – only half to one teaspoon. Offer new foods one at a time, every 2-4 days. Begin with one very small meal a day (more like a taste really) and gradually increase the quantity and frequency of solid feeds. Let your baby's appetite guide you.

Important Information

Offer a wide variety of foods to provide all the important nutrients baby needs, and take special note of the following:

Energy:

Babies need food for growth and energy, but they have small tummies and need to eat little amounts often. Foods containing fat like avocado, peanut butter, cheese and margarine spreads are a rich source of energy for baby. Include regularly in the diet.

Protein:

Babies need to be offered a variety of protein containing foods. Vegetarian sources of protein include:

- Breast milk or formula,
- Legumes (cooked dried beans, peas and lentils), hummus, baked beans,
- Milk and milk products e.g. yoghurt, cheese, custard
- Egg
- Soy products e.g. tofu and tempeh
- Peanut butters and other nut butters

Vitamin B₁₂:

Vitamin B₁₂ is an essential vitamin found only in animal foods. Babies born to vegan mothers can have a Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency. Both mother and baby are likely to need supplementation which should be prescribed by a health professional.

Vegetarian sources of Vitamin B₁₂ include:

- Breast milk (from a well nourished mother) and formula
- Egg
- Milk and milk products e.g. yoghurt, cheese and custard

Fibre:

Plant foods can be high in fibre and bulky for a baby's small tummy. Feed little and often. Too much fibre may cause diarrhoea and can interfere with calcium and iron absorption. Choose lower fibre foods like white/wheatmeal bread, white rice and baby cereals. Remember babies get all the fibre they need from fruit, vegetables, breads and cereals.

Iron:

Iron is important for baby's healthy growth and development. Offer a variety of foods containing iron including:

- Breast milk or formula, or after one year of age an iron enriched toddler milk drink.
- Iron enriched baby cereals e.g. Farex Baby Rice, or Wattie's First Muesli etc
- Legumes (cooked dried beans, peas and lentils), baked beans
- Green leafy vegetables and green peas
- Egg yolk

Vitamin C helps baby absorb iron, so include fruit and vegetables as part of meals e.g. apples, pears, tomato, broccoli, kiwifruit and oranges. Some babies may still not get enough iron from food and may need an iron supplement. This needs to be recommended by a health professional. It can be dangerous to give supplements without professional advice.

Please remember:

- Tea and coffee are not suitable drinks for infants and toddlers as they reduce iron absorption from foods.
- Cows' milk can be introduced as a main milk drink after 12 months. Introducing earlier may lead to iron deficiency.

For further information on the Wattie's babyfood range and meal ideas visit www.forbaby.co.nz,

● or phone the Wattie's Baby Product Info-Line 0800 222 936 ●

For more information on feeding your baby, see your Plunket Nurse or call Plunket Line 0800 933 922