

Good food for infants *under one year*




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Good food for infants *under one year*

The Swedish Food Agency's advice on food for children up to one year is based on collected research and is intended to be support for parents. It is written to suit most families. Not all the advice will work for everyone, but it can be adapted to your family's situation.



For the first six months, breast milk is the best food for your baby. For babies who are not breastfed, infant formula provides the energy and nutrients they need.

The first six months

The first months of a child's life is a special time – radically new and fantastic. In retrospect, this period usually feels quite short, but in the middle of all the fantastic it can be exhausting. Many parents are unprepared for how they will be governed by their child's needs and how it feels to be woken in the middle of the night when he or she is hungry or needs closeness.

To get a daily routine that works, it's a good idea to gradually find a rhythm that provides your child with security and the parents with some structure to their lives. Since life, at its beginning, deals mostly with eating and sleeping, routines are often built around mealtimes. For the first six months, breast milk or infant formula is the best food for your child. But the food isn't just about nutrition; it also provides time for closeness that is important to your child.

Breast milk

Breast milk contains all the nutrition a child needs to grow and develop during the first six months. The only exception is vitamin D, which your child needs to get through vitamin D drops. Milk production is stimulated when your child nurses. For some, breastfeeding starts up easily; for others it can take some time. So it's important to get the help you need, for example from a maternity hospital, a breastfeeding clinic, or a nurse at a Child Health Centre (BVC). Don't be afraid to ask! Today there is a lot of knowledge about how to make it easier to get breastfeeding to work. On www.1177.se, the county council website, there is also practical advice on what to do when breastfeeding.

Can breastfeeding decrease the risk of illness?

Breast milk contains substances that help reduce the risk of infections, such as ear infections and stomach flu. Research also indicates that children who are breastfed, or both breastfed and formula-fed, have a slightly lower risk of becoming overweight as adults. However, this does not mean that all formula-fed children will become obese. There are also studies suggesting that breastfeeding may have other positive effects, but further research is needed. For allergies, asthma, and celiac disease, breastfeeding is unlikely to affect the risk.

Saving breast milk

A small child is susceptible to infections. If you are going to express breast milk, it is therefore important to wash your hands first, so that bacteria or viruses from your hands are not transferred to the milk. The milk does not need to cool down; it can be put directly into the refrigerator or freezer. Breast milk can be kept for up to three days in the refrigerator. In the freezer, it can keep for at least six months. Defrost frozen breast milk in warm or cold water or in the refrigerator, not at room temperature. Throw leftover milk away after your child has finished eating.

Is breast milk affected by what the mother eats?

What a mother eats affects her breast milk. You can read more about it at www.livsmedelsverket.se.

Infant formula

If you don't breastfeed your child, there are infant formulas that provide the energy and nutrition he or she needs. The formulas that are available are made to resemble the nutrients of breast milk as closely as possible.

There are different kinds of formulas – at the Child Health Centre you can get advice as to what kind is most suitable for your child. On the other hand, you should never make your own formula with regular milk or anything similar, since it's not possible to get the right proportions of nutrients yourself. The wrong proportions can damage your child's kidneys, or prevent normal growth.

Formula for infants over six months is called follow-on formula.

Combining breast and bottle feeding

Sometimes you may want to combine breast and bottle feeding. This works for many, but for some it can lead to stopping breastfeeding earlier than planned. This could be due to insufficient stimulation of breast milk production, or because your child prefers to suck on a feeding bottle because the food comes out more quickly. It could be a good idea to give them the formula from a cup instead of a bottle.

It is also a good idea, if possible, to wait until milk production has started up properly and stabilised before giving a formula. On the other hand, there are mothers who may need to provide a formula to start with, and then switch to breastfeeding. At the Child Health Centre you can get practical advice on how to combine breastfeeding and formula.



Vitamin D drops

Small children don't get enough vitamin D from food. Too little vitamin D can prevent the child's skeleton from developing as it should. All children therefore need vitamin D supplements every day for the first two years. It's important that your child gets the drops regularly. Some children need vitamin D drops for more than two years.

Read more at
www.livsmedelsverket.se/en

Preparing infant formula

Since children are susceptible to infections, good hygiene is important when preparing formula. Always wash your hands before you begin. It's also important to use clean bottles and teats and to wash them carefully; they do not, however, need to be sterilised.

Don't mix the formula with water from the hot water tap, as it may contain copper from the pipes. Use cold water instead, and run the water until it is cold. Heat the water afterwards, and mix the formula according to the instructions on the package. The package also shows how long the prepared formula stays good. Throw away unused formula after feeding.

On www.1177.se, the county council website, there is also practical advice on how to feed with formula.

If you have your own well, you should analyze the water quality before giving it to children. Small children are more sensitive than adults to bacteria and chemicals that may be present in the water. You can read more about water tests and get help interpreting your analysis results at www.livsmedelsverket.se.

How much should children eat?

Since all children are different, it's not possible to say how much breast milk or formula an infant needs. The best method is usually to let your child's appetite control how much and how often he or she eats.

The more often your child is breastfed, the more milk is produced. Sometimes a child will want to eat more often, which could be due to the fact that milk production hasn't managed to adjust to his or her needs. It could also be that your child needs closeness and comfort more than food.

If you feed with formula, the package should indicate how much is recommended. But even if your child gets formula, it is important to let him or her control how much they want to eat. Sometimes they may not want all that's been prepared, and you shouldn't try to get your child to finish a bottle.

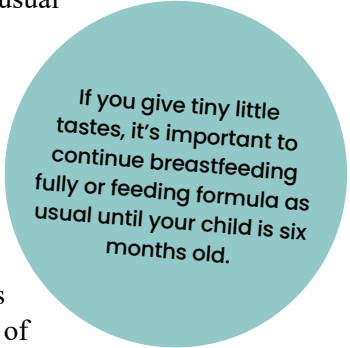
You can check your child's height and weight curve at the Child Health Centre. This is a tool to help determine more easily whether your child is growing properly. If your child is following the height and weight curve, you don't need to worry that he or she is eating too little.

Tiny little tastes


A number of children become interested in food early on. From the age of four months at the earliest, you can let your child taste small samples of solid foods, as long as they are small amounts and they don't compete with breastfeeding. Even if you give them small tastes, it is still important to continue full breastfeeding or feeding with a formula as usual until your child is six months old.

Tiny little tastes give your child the opportunity to slowly try new flavours and textures. You can, for example, take a little of your own food – just a pinch – with a spoon or your finger, and let your child get a little on his or her tongue. It's not an issue of bringing out the bib and a plate, but letting a taste be just a taste and not the start of meals. It's not a problem if the food contains salt, since it is just a very small amount. On the other hand, the food must of course have a soft texture so that your child does not choke on it.

If your child doesn't seem interested, you don't have to give him or her a taste. Breast milk or formula provides all the nutrition your child needs for the first six months, except vitamin D. It's also just as good to wait until your child is six months old.



If you give tiny little tastes, it's important to continue breastfeeding fully or feeding formula as usual until your child is six months old.

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair smiling as she feeds a baby. She is holding a small piece of food on her finger, which the baby is about to eat. The baby is wearing a blue shirt. In the foreground, there is a plate of food including a corn cob, a salad, and some meatballs in sauce. A glass of water is also visible on the table.

If your child is curious about the food you're eating, you can – from the age of four months onward – let it taste a tiny bit once in a while.



Introducing solid foods – from around six months

At the age of six months, it is time to start getting your child used to regular food. Learning to eat regular food is a gradual process. In the beginning, it's mostly an issue of your child getting used to new textures, more flavours, eating from a spoon, and learning how to chew. Continue breastfeeding or giving formula as usual during this period. Since breast milk and formula contain so much nutrition, you don't need to worry if your child wants to wean slowly.

What can I give my child?

There are no rules about what to start with. The important thing is that the food has a soft consistency so that your child does not choke on it. For example, you can mash a bit of cooked potato, or a little rice, with a fork and add breast milk or formula so it becomes a loose mush. You can also mash up root vegetables and greens this way. Your child can also be allowed to pick out very, very small, soft bits of food.

You can also try boiled, mashed, or mixed chicken, fish, ground beef, beans, lentils, and tofu. Meat, beans, and tofu contain a lot of iron, which your child needs.

Mashed bananas, apples, and pears can easily be prepared by carefully scraping the fruit with a spoon.

Keep in mind your child needs to slowly get used to foods, even gruel and porridge. During the first few weeks a couple teaspoons of gruel or porridge is enough; increase the amount little by little later on.

Gradually introduce your child to other foods containing gluten, such as bread, sandwich wafers, pasta, and bulgur. Gluten is found in wheat, barley, and rye – check the packaging. Oats, on the other hand, contain only a small amount of gluten. Slowly increasing the amount of gluten-containing foods can help reduce the risk of your child developing celiac disease (gluten intolerance).

Even if you have celiac disease, allergies, or your baby has eczema, it is beneficial to introduce all food groups within the first year of life, including foods with gluten, fish, eggs, and peanuts.

Small children are sensitive to bacteria and viruses that can cause gastroenteritis. It's therefore very important to think about hygiene when preparing food for your child. Read more in recipe ideas.

There is not enough research to be able to say how quickly children can or should get used to food. The age interval described here is instead based on proven experience. Since all children are different, you should not consider this interval as fixed. Sometimes there can be hassles around food for different reasons. You can get support from the Child Health Centre concerning this kind of issues.

How do I serve solid foods?

If you have tried serving small bits just to taste as described in Tiny little tastes, you can slowly increase the amount. During the first few weeks, a couple of teaspoons are enough. If you didn't start with tiny little tastes earlier, you should start when your child is six months old. Start with small amounts so that your child gradually gets used to them. For the first few days a teaspoon are enough; the amount can then slowly be increased.

Make sure the food isn't too hot; feed your child with a small spoon or let him or her pick up very, very small, soft bits of food. Most children have difficulties putting food into their mouths properly and swallowing it. Food coming back out often doesn't mean your child doesn't like it, but that he or she doesn't know what to do with it and isn't used to the texture. Regular food isn't as sweet as breast milk or formula, and the new flavours can take some time to get used to.

A number of children accept it quickly, while others are more sceptical and need to try new food several times. You can put your child on the right track by tasting the food yourself and showing him or her that you like it. But if your child seems unwilling, it's better to wait a few days and then try again.

When is the best time to give solids?

The time of day you give solid foods doesn't really matter. Some people find it simpler to give them at lunch, while others think dinner time, or in between, works better. The most important thing is to offer solids when your child isn't too hungry, too full, or too tired. Try different approaches and find what works best.

How much food does my children need?

It's not possible to say exactly how much food small children need. Some children will always want more, while others will barely want to taste. Both cases can be frustrating for parents. In most cases, your child will make sure he or she gets enough food by showing that he or she is hungry. Sometimes it may be easier to your child to eat if you eat along with them. If your child eats just a little food but gets plenty of breast milk or formula, the nourishment they contain will most probably be enough. If your child is growing and developing normally, you don't need to worry.



It may happen that children who breastfeed choose to stop when they start getting gruel in a bottle, since the food comes out of the bottle faster. It may therefore be better to give the child porridge instead, or gruel in a mug. Also keep in mind that porridge and gruel often contain gluten. Give your child small portions to start.

If you have a child who wants to eat a lot, it may be difficult to know when to stop. If your child is still hungry, it may be better to top up with breast milk or formula than to increase the amount of food too quickly. The same applies to gruel and porridge – increase the amount slowly.



First Foods: Simple Basic R

Purée of Potato, Root Vegetables or Greens

Most root vegetables and greens can be mashed. Try, for example:

1 potato, 1 small carrot, 1 piece of parsnip, corn kernels, green peas, a few florets of broccoli or cauliflower

1 tsp vegetable oil, preferably rapeseed

A little breast milk or regular milk

Instructions:

Peel and slice the potato and root vegetables, cut or divide the vegetables into smaller pieces.

Place the pieces in a saucepan and cover with water just to cover the pieces. Boil until soft. You can also cook in the microwave.

Mash with a fork or press through a garlic press or sieve. If you are making larger quantities, it may be practical to use a hand blender or food processor.

Vegetarian Lentil Stew

1 cup dried lentils or 3 cups cooked

2 tbsp rapeseed oil

1 yellow onion

1 bell pepper

1 clove garlic

400 g crushed tomatoes

thyme

Instructions:

Cook dried lentils according to the instructions on the package, but without salt, or use pre-cooked.

Chop the onion, bell pepper, and garlic and soften in oil in a saucepan or wok over medium heat. Add crushed tomatoes and cooked lentils. Bring to a boil and season with thyme.

A few fish cakes or a slice of blood pudding are foods that only need to be warmed in the microwave and are suitable for small children.



Recipes

Meat or chicken

15–20 portions

(1 portion = approx. 2 tbsp)

400 g minced meat or chicken

4–5 dl water

dill, parsley, or other herbs

Instructions:

Cut the chicken into bits and boil thoroughly, until the meat is white throughout.

Chop fine with a blender, food processor, or shred with a grater.

Mash minced meat with a fork while it cooks.

Add runoff to desired consistency and spice with dill or parsley, for example.

Fish

1 salmon filet (approx 100–150 g)

1 tsp liquid margarine or oil,
preferably

rapeseed

Dill or other herbs, (optional) pressed

lemon

Instructions:

Cut the salmon into several smaller pieces and put on a plate. Cover with a loose lid and microwave on high for 2–3 min. Mash or cut into small pieces and mix with oil and herbs and/or squeeze some lemon over it.

*Finish the meal with fruit,
scraped with a spoon, or
mashed berries.*

To keep in mind when preparing food

Children under one year are especially sensitive to bacteria and viruses that can cause stomach ailments. It's therefore very important to think about hygiene when preparing food for small children:

- ✓ Wash your hands before you begin preparing food.
- ✓ Wash your hands immediately after handling raw meat and chicken.
- ✓ Wash cutting boards and kitchen equipment carefully after cutting raw meat and chicken.
- ✓ Cook or fry minced meat and chicken thoroughly.
- ✓ Put food to be saved in the refrigerator or freezer as quickly as possible. If the food is allowed to stand at room temperature for more than a couple of hours, bacteria can start to grow. Small amounts of warm or lukewarm food can be put into the refrigerator immediately.

From around the age of eight months

As your baby shows interest in larger portions, gradually increase the amounts at each meal. Breast milk or formula still provides a significant portion of your baby's nutritional needs. Therefore, there is no rush to transition to solid foods at all meals. Let your baby's appetite guide the pace. By the time your baby is 10 to 12 months old, they will typically need two main meals per day and a few snacks in between.

At this age, food only needs to be coarsely chopped with a knife or grated. You can also give slightly larger pieces that your baby can hold themselves.

Breakfast, snacks, and evening meals

Breast milk, formula, porridge, gruel, (preferably in a mug) or bread and butter are good for breakfast, snacks, and dinner. Serve them along with a little fruit, or some berries or vegetables.

Porridge and gruel

For children less than a year old, enriched instant porridge is a good idea, since it provides more vitamins and minerals than homemade porridge. It's rich in iron, for example, which can be difficult for small children to get enough of. At the same time, serving your child homemade porridge is good, to get him or her used to the taste. It is also good to vary between different types of porridge and gruel and between different brands that you buy.

There should be no more than three meals with porridge or gruel per day. Your child will also need to get used to other foods, and to learn to chew food with a coarser consistency.

Whole grains and fibre

Whole grains and fibre are good, even for small children, but a number of children can get loose stool if they get too much. For other children it can be the opposite – they can become constipated. How much fibre children can eat without affecting the stomach varies from child to child – experiment with it. A good way of getting just enough fibre is varying between whole-grain products and types less rich in fibre.



Children learn a lot through imitation. Show your enthusiasm for different foods by enjoying them yourself when you eat with your child.

Dairy products

Wait to give milk as a drink and larger amounts of sour milk or yoghurt until your child is a year old. Milk itself contains many important vitamins and minerals, but only a little iron. If your child gets too much milk or dairy, there is a risk that he or she won't manage to eat enough of other foods, which are more rich in iron. With breast milk or formula, your child will still get enough milk that's better adapted to him or her.

Iron is an important nutrient that can be difficult for small children to get enough of. If your child does not get iron-enriched instant porridge or gruel, it is very important that he or she gets other foods rich in iron like meat, blood pudding or other blood meals. Beans, chickpeas, lentils, and tofu are vegetarian sources of iron.

Lunch and dinner

Potatoes, pasta, rice, bread, bulgur, or similar items should be the base for mealtimes, along with root vegetables and greens. Meat, fish, chicken, eggs, beans, lentils, or tofu make mealtime complete. Finish off with a little fruit or berries. Fruit and berries contain vitamins such as vitamin C that help your child absorb the iron found in foods. Keep introducing new flavours and consistencies so that your child gets used to many different types of food. It may be easier to accept a new flavour if it's served alongside food your child already likes.

If you're not experienced in cooking or are unsure whether you can prepare food that provides enough nutrition, you may think that it's easier to serve ready-prepared baby foods. There's nothing wrong with prepared food, but it can be expensive to buy it. And it's not really difficult to cook homemade food. Take a little bit of the family's meal, for example, but skip the salt. Eating too much salt can cause high blood pressure.

Children under two years need food with a little more fat than adults do, since they're growing so quickly. A teaspoon of liquid margarine or oil – preferably rapeseed oil – per portion is enough, if there isn't already fat in the recipe. Prepared baby food already contains enough fat, so nothing extra needs to be added.

As regards protein, children in general have no problem getting what they need.

How much food does my child need?

Your child knows how much food he or she needs. During some meals your child will eat a little less food, but naturally compensates for this by eating more at another meal. Over the longer term, children most often get enough food. As long as your child is growing and developing properly, you do not need to be worried.

Small children can't manage large portions of food and therefore need to eat more often than adults. Your child will get the amount of food he or she needs more easily through regular mealtimes. A good meal routine could be breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and a few snack times in between.



How long should I keep breastfeeding or giving formula?

Breast milk and formula are still important sources of nourishment while your child is learning to eat other foods. Since it's a good idea to introduce new foods slowly, your child should continue with breast milk or formula.

The more regular food your child eats, the less breast milk or formula is needed, but you can continue breastfeeding as long as you and the child want to, even after the child is a year old. It's also good to continue with breast milk formula throughout the first year.

Avoid snacking

Corn puffs, wheat wafers, raisins, and the like may seem practical for keeping your child busy in the carriage or as a soother. But this isn't a good idea – constantly having something in his or her mouth is not good for your child's teeth or appetite.

Sweet drinks like juice mixes or sweet tea in their feeding bottles should be avoided completely. They provide no nutrition and can cause cavities. It's much better if your child gets used to drinking water when it's thirsty.



Is there anything children under one year should avoid?

Infants can eat most of the food the rest of the family eats, but some foods should be avoided, or they should wait until he or she is a year old.

Leafy green vegetables

Wait to serve leafy green vegetables like lettuce, rocket, and spinach until your child is a year old. Then increase the amount bit by bit. These vegetables contain nitrates, which can be converted into nitrites in the body. In children under one year old, nitrites can block the transport of oxygen in the blood. Beetroot juice is also high in nitrates and should therefore not be given to babies.

Green potatoes

Green or damaged potatoes contain solanin, a substance that can cause stomach pains, vomiting, and diarrhoea. Both adults and children should therefore avoid green or damaged potatoes. Solanin is also found in undamaged potatoes, but just under the skin. Peel potatoes, even new ones, before you give them to children under one year old.

Whole Nuts and Peanuts

It was previously thought that allergies could be prevented by waiting to give children nuts and peanuts until they were one year old, but research shows that this is not the case. However, there is a risk that children may choke on whole nuts and peanuts, but nut butter and nut flour are fine.

Honey

Do not give honey to children under one year old. It could contain spores that, in rare cases, can develop into bacteria in the intestine which produce botulin, a deadly poison.

Unpasteurised milk

Neither children nor adults should drink unpasteurised milk. It can contain harmful bacteria, like EHEC or campylobacter. EHEC is a ‘new’ bacteria that began spreading in Sweden in the 1990s, and which can cause serious kidney damage in small children. Unpasteurised milk cannot be sold in stores, but can be gotten at farms.

Rice cakes and rice drinks

Rice cakes and vegetable-based drinks made of rice contain arsenic. Children who regularly eat rice cakes and drink rice drinks, can ingest amounts that can be damaging to their health in the long run. Small children are more sensitive than older children, and therefore rice cakes and rice drinks should not be given to children under six years of age.

Porridge and gruel made from rice can also contain arsenic. Therefore, do not serve rice porridge and rice gruel exclusively. Instead, vary them with other types and brands. For instance, for gluten-intolerant children, you could alternate with corn-based products. In total, children should not eat rice products – rice, rice porridge, rice noodles and rice snacks – more than four times a week.

Salt

The food we eat should taste good. This also applies to children’s food. Don’t be afraid to spice up their food with herbs like dill, parsley, coriander, and others. On the other hand, be careful with salt for children under one year old. Excessive salt intake can increase blood pressure in both children and adults. Therefore, it’s advisable to minimize the amount of salt in your family’s meals. Alternatively, you can set aside a portion of the food for your child before adding salt. Avoid salty snacks and don’t give salted meats, like sausage and smoked pork, as often.

Sugar

Avoid sweetened foods as much as possible. Sugar only provides empty calories – no vitamins and minerals. There is a lot of sugar in foods like flavoured yogurt and sour milk, biscuits and cookies, rosehip soup, and creams, jellies, and marmalades, as well as candy and ice cream.

Sweet drinks like juice mixes, fruit juices, and sodas also contain a lot of sugar. Don't give your child these drinks; get them used to drinking water instead.

Vary the food

Sometimes, there are harmful substances in our food, both natural substances and environmental contaminants. A good way of reducing the risk of taking in too much of a harmful substance is to eat a varied diet, in other words, to eat different types of food. This applies to both children and adults.

Allergies

If you suspect an allergy

If you think your child can't tolerate a food, consulting with a nurse at the Child Health Centre is important. You shouldn't eliminate foods on your own until your child has been diagnosed. It doesn't necessarily have to be an allergy if your child suddenly gets sick from food. Small children can develop redness or a rash around the mouth, a rash on the bottom or an upset stomach without it being due to allergy or hypersensitivity.

If your child is allergic

The most common allergies during a child's first year are allergies to milk proteins and egg proteins. If your child is allergic, getting special advice from a dietician is important.

There is more information on food allergies at www.livsmedelsverket.se.



Suggestion for a daily menu for children 0–1 year

Here are examples of what a day's meals could look like during the first year. Don't take this as something you have to follow to the letter; let your child's interest in the food set the pace!

Age	Meals
0–6 months	Breast milk or infant formula according to your child's feeding rhythm*
6–8 months	Breast milk or follow-on formula according to your child's feeding rhythm Small amounts of solid foods (puréed or in soft pieces), porridge and/or gruel
8–12 months	1–2 main meals* of gradually coarser consistency Breakfast and 2–3 snacks Breast milk follow-on formula according to your child's feeding rhythm
From approximately 12 months	2 main meals ** Breakfast and 2–3 snacks Breast milk as long as both child and mother like

* If your child shows interest, he or she can be allowed to taste tiny samples of other food. Read more on page 8.

** Main meal means a meal with

- potatoes, pasta, rice, bulgur, or similar
- meat, fish, chicken, eggs, beans, lentils, or tofu
- vegetables
- possibly fruit or berries for dessert.



Would you like to know more?

Visit www.livsmedelsverket.se.
There is information on food for
children, and much more.