Feeding Babies Under 1 Year Old

**What to Feed**

Breast milk is best for babies.

Breast milk is easy to digest and provides the nutrients babies need.

Breast milk helps babies:
- Grow
- Develop
- Fight infection
- Stay healthy

If breast milk is not available, feed babies infant formula with iron.

Infant formula meets a baby’s nutrient needs and helps them grow, develop, and stay healthy.

Do not replace breast milk or formula with cow milk, goat milk, or other beverages. These do not meet a baby’s nutrient needs.

**How to Feed**

Healthy babies can control how much they eat. They eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. Feed babies according to cues listed below. Avoid overfeeding.

**Signs of hunger**
- Wakes, becomes restless
- Sucks on lips, tongue, fingers, or fists
- Opens mouth and turns head when touched on chin or lips
- Shows eagerness and excitement about feeding
- Crying (late signal of hunger when hunger cues are missed)

**Signs of fullness**
- Seals or closes lips
- Turns head away
- Sucks less or stops sucking
- Spits out nipple
- Pushes away
- Cries and fusses if feeding continues

Feed a baby in a safe, supportive, and calm environment.
- Always hold infant when breast or bottle feeding
- Provide support and make eye contact
- Do not prop the bottle or put baby to bed with the bottle

**Things to Avoid**

- Never feed honey to babies under one year of age. It may cause botulism, a serious infection.
- Do not put juice or other sugar-containing beverages in a bottle.
- Do not feed babies food in a bottle.
- Limit foods that have a lot of salt.

**Feeding Solids**

Breast milk or formula meets all of a baby’s nutrient needs up to 6 months of age.

At 4–6 months, many babies show readiness to eat solids. They are ready when they can:
- Sit upright with support
- Hold their head steady
- Close their lips around a spoon
- Keep food in their mouth and swallow it

Introduce one new food at a time. Typical first foods are strained or pureed meats, and iron-fortified single grain infant cereal.

As a baby eats more solid food, they will drink less breast milk or formula. Follow the directions from parents and their provider.