Keeping Your Baby Healthy
Feeding your baby in a healthy way

*Your baby needs healthy food to grow*
Your baby is growing and changing every day. As your baby grows, your baby’s needs will change. During the first year, all babies need breast milk (breast milk is best for your baby) or baby formula. At around 6 months, your baby can start eating healthy solid foods.

Feeding your child in a healthy and loving way helps your child learn good food habits. It helps them feel good about eating and have good self-esteem. When your child is hungry, feed him right away; that will help him feel safe and happy.

*Babies and toddlers can easily choke on some foods*

**Do not feed your baby:**
- Hot dogs
- Popcorn
- Raisins
- Nuts
- Chips
- Hard candy
- Raw vegetables
- Seeds
- Grapes
- Peanut butter
- Honey – never give to a child under 1

*From birth to 4 months your baby*
- Sucks and swallows liquids
- Pushes its tongue out
- Has a special cry or fussiness to show she/ he is hungry
  - Feed your baby when s/he is hungry; do not try to feed your baby on a schedule

*You can breastfeed your baby*
- Breastfeeding is the best nutrition for all babies
- Breast milk has antibiotics that help your baby stay well
- Breastfed babies are less likely to get allergies
- Breastfeeding is good for you too, it helps you get back in shape and lowers the risk of breast cancer
- Breastfeeding may take some practice, don’t give up and remember to drink lots of fluids.
- Let your doctor know if you are taking any medicine or drugs, or if you are infected with HIV
- Breastfeed your baby for the first year or longer, if possible
You can breastfeed when you work

- You can pump your milk and put it in a clean bottle
- Empty your breasts by hand or use a breast pump
- You can refrigerate breast milk for up to 48 hours
- You can freeze breast milk for up to three months
- Thaw breast milk in the refrigerator
- Do not microwave breast milk or heat it on a stove. Put the bottle in hot water to warm it up

If you bottle feed, here is what you should know

- Use only breast milk or formula with iron
- Always follow the instructions to make formula
- Always hold the bottle, don’t prop it up; this will help prevent dental problems
- Hold your baby closely while she feeds; look at your baby and talk lovingly
- Don’t put cereal in the bottle; it can choke your baby
- Don’t microwave the bottle; put the bottle in hot water to warm it up
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle; your baby may choke and it can be bad for their teeth

When your baby is 4 to 6 months old

If your baby can:

- Sit with support
- Hold head steady
- Keep food in mouth and swallow it

At about six months you can:

- Start baby cereal with iron, begin with plain rice cereal
  - Later try oatmeal, then barley
  - Mix the cereal with breast milk or formula; it should be thin at first
  - Feed cereal from a baby spoon only; do not put cereal in the bottle
  - Throw away anything unused in your baby’s cup or plate

When your baby is 5 to 7 months old

If your baby can:

- Sit without support
- Start to chew

You can:

- Start to teach him to drink from a small cup
- Feed your baby fruits and vegetables; start with vegetables first and offer a new one each week
- Use smoothies, strained or pureed cooked vegetables
- Try strained or pureed soft fruits
- Use plain food without added salt or sugar
- Offer different kinds of foods
• Always use a clean spoon to take food out of jars
• Let your baby start to feed himself

Before 6 months DO NOT give your baby:
• Homemade carrots
• Beets
• Spinach
• Turnips or collard greens

When your baby is 7 to 8 months old
As soon as your baby can:
• Grasp and hold onto things
• Use a cup with help

You can start to give your baby these foods:
• Strain or puree foods like
  o Meat; do not give hot dogs or meats like bologna, ham or salami
  o Chicken
  o Beans
  o Cottage cheese
  o Plain yogurt
  o Cooked egg yoke; mash with breast milk, formula or plain yogurt. Do not use egg whites; they may cause allergies
  o Mashed tofu

Offer a variety of foods; let your baby begin to feed herself.

When your baby is 8 to 10 months old
• When your baby can:
• Take a bite of food
• Pick up finger foods and feed himself
• Use a cup

You can start giving your baby fruit juices
• Make sure your baby has only 2 ounces of juice mixed with 2 ounces of water once a day
• Give your baby juice in a cup, not a bottle
• DO NOT give your baby orange or pineapple juice yet!
• DO NOT give your baby unpasteurized apple juice

You can also feed your baby
• Mixed grain baby cereal
• Fruits and cooked vegetables mashed with a fork

Your baby can start to try finger foods
• Small pieces of mild cheese
• Toasted bread squares or small pieces of soft tortilla
• Small pieces of soft, cooked vegetables and peeled, soft fruits
• Cooked plain rice or noodles mashed and chopped
• Small pieces of cooked meat, chicken or fish; it must be ground.
• Small pieces of tofu

Do not add salt, sugar, fat or spices to your baby’s food
Let your baby feed himself

When your baby is 10 to 12 months old
When your baby can
• Chew and swallow soft, mashed and chopped foods
• Use a cup
• Start to use a spoon

You can start feeding your baby
• Small pieces of cooked, soft foods, the family eats such as:
  o Cereals, bread and crackers
  o Fruit and cooked vegetables
  o Cooked soft meats, cooked beans or lentils, cooked egg yolks
  o Casseroles

Let your baby eat with a spoon or her hands
• Let your baby sit at the table with the family
• Start to use a cup more; give your baby a small cup of breast milk, formula, or water to drink with her food
• Stop giving your baby a bottle little by little around 12 months; if you wait longer, your baby may not want to give up the bottle. Bottle feeding can cause tooth decay

When your baby is 1 year old
When your baby can
• Chew and swallow soft table foods
• Use a spoon

You can start to give your child whole milk
• Begin by giving a little at a time
• When your baby gets used to whole milk, offer 4 ounces, 4 times a day
• Give your baby whole milk from age 1 until age 2
• Serve your baby liquids from a cup only

Your child can also start eating cooked whole eggs
Offer your child three small meals a day plus snack
When your child is 1 to 3 years old
From ages 1 to 30 your child’s taste in foods will change a lot. One day your child may like one food, the next day your child may not like the same food. Your child may also be picky and messy; this is a normal part of growing and learning.

Feed your toddler all kinds of foods every day
- Offer your child three meals a day and two to three snacks every day
- Your child will eat more on some days than on others
- It is normal for your child to eat less after the first year; your child is not growing as fast

Let your child decide how much to eat from the foods you serve
- Give small servings
- Give about 1 tablespoon of each food for every year of age
- If they finish it all, you can offer more

If you are still breastfeeding your child, that’s great; breastfeed after meals and at night.

Feed your child whole milk up to 2 years of age
- When your child is no longer drinking breast milk or formula give whole milk
- Do not use low-fat or skim milk unless your doctor tells you to
- Do not give more than 16 ounces of milk per day
- After age 2, your child can drink low-fat or skim milk

Limit juice to one half cut per day
- Serve fruit instead of juice when you can
- Your child should be drinking only from a cup, not a bottle

Give your child healthy foods; serve these foods every day:
- Breads, grains, cereals (whole grains when possible)
- Fruits and vegetables
- Milk products
- Protein foods

Limit the amount of salty, sugary and fatty foods

When your child is 3 to 5 years old
Your 3 to 5 year old will eat more than a toddler
Give about 1 tablespoon of each food for each year of your child’s age
If they finish it all, you can offer more food
Offer all kind of foods and give your child healthy foods

Serve these foods every day
- Breads, grains, cereals (whole grains when possible)
- Fruits and vegetables
- Milk products
• Protein foods

Although kids love sweets, it is best to limit them. Also limit salty and fatty foods like chips and French fries.

Limit juice to ¾ cup per day
• Serve fruit instead of juice when you can
• If your child is thirsty at other times, offer water instead of sweet drinks
• Sweet drinks can make your child feel full and can cause tooth decay

You can help your child be a good eater
Some children at this age are fussy eaters; to help them you can serve foods that are:
• Bite size or easy for your child to hold
• Soft and easy to chew
• Mile and simple
• Not too hot or too cold
• Different colors, textures and shapes

It is normal for children to play with their food; if your child stops eating or throws food, take the food away

Do not allow your child to fill-up on juices, milk or snack foods before a meal

Be patient

You can help make mealtime a happy time
• Eat with your child; children like to eat with other people
• Try to have meals and snacks about the same time every day
• Eat the same foods as your child
• Show your child how you eat your vegetables
• Do not bribe or force your child to eat

You can help your child be interested in food
• Take your child grocery shopping; let him help pick out fruits and vegetables at the store
• Have your child help in the kitchen; they can wash fruit and vegetables or tear lettuce for a salad
• Have your child help set the table or help clean up a little
• Let your child make her own lunch