

# Infant Feeding Guidelines

## Key Messages for Health Professionals



### Birth to 6 months

- **Breastfeeding** is the normal and unequalled method of feeding infants. **Exclusive breastfeeding** is recommended until 6 months with continued breastfeeding for up to 2 years or longer.



- A daily **vitamin D** supplement of 400 IU/day is recommended for all breastfed or partially breastfed babies and children.
- For infants who are not breastfed, **infant formula** is recommended until 9-12 months. Powdered infant formula is not sterile and has been linked to outbreaks of food borne illness.
- Follow Division of Responsibility. Infants **feed on-cue** by deciding when and how much to eat. [www.ellynsatterinstitute.org](http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org)
- There is no evidence to suggest that feeding changes are necessary for the relief of infant colic, constipation or reflux.
- **WHO growth** charts adapted for Canada should be used for routine growth monitoring. [www.whogrowthcharts.ca](http://www.whogrowthcharts.ca)

### 6 to 24 months

- Delay the **introduction of solid foods** until about 6 months.
  - The first complementary foods introduced should be **iron-rich family foods, served 2 or more times daily in different textures**. *For example: pureed, minced or shredded meat, fish or poultry; meat alternatives such as mashed beans, lentils or eggs; or iron-fortified infant cereals.*
  - After iron-rich foods are introduced **there is no order** for the introduction of other foods, except cow's milk after 9 months of age and honey after 12 months of age.
  - Parents should provide a variety of **soft textures and finger foods** around 6 months. Ensure that lumpy, minced, shredded or chopped textures are offered no later than 9 months.
  - There is no evidence to support late introduction of high **allergy** risk foods such as eggs, peanut butter or shellfish even in high risk families
  - Whole cow's milk can be introduced at 9-12 months. Offer 500 ml per day; do not exceed 750 ml per day.
- Use an **open cup** when fluids other than breastmilk are introduced. "Sippy" cups do not support the development of mature drinking skills
  - Offer **water** to satisfy thirst. Limit juice and sweetened beverages and avoid prolonged bottle feeding. Transition to open cup to be complete by 18–24 months of age.
  - Follow **Division of Responsibility**. By 1 year of age provide regular meals and snacks. Parents are responsible for *what, where and when* food is provided and children are responsible for *how much* and *whether* they eat.
  - Promote **family meals** and encourage parents to be role models to instill lifelong healthy eating habits.



Joint Statement of Health Canada,  
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**Public Health** Prevent  
Promote Protect  
**Santé publique** Prévention  
Promotion Protection