Foods for babies and toddlers
Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Starting your baby on solid food is an important milestone in their life.

This book has three main aims:

- To provide you with information on starting your baby on solid foods and progress towards family meals.
- To give you a guide to the types and amounts of food that your growing baby needs.
- To help you feel confident in feeding your baby.

You may like to know more about some of the things in this book – or you may have some concerns or difficulties that you would like help with.

Places to get help:

- Your local child and family health centre on 1300 733 606 (South Australia only).
- New mothers groups.
- Parent Helpline 1300 364 100 (South Australia only).
- An accredited practicing dietitian (APD) who works with children web site: www.daa.asn.au.
- Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) 1800 686 2686.
- Your doctor.

Find out more in ‘Where to go for help’ at the end of this book.

Quick guide

This book is divided into the following parts:
When should I start solid foods?

Starting solid food is an important part of your baby's learning and development. New colours, smells, tastes and textures are introduced through foods.

At around six months of age your baby will be ready to try solid foods. Up until six months breastmilk or infant formula is usually all babies need. At around six months solid foods are needed to provide extra energy and nutrients. Even after your baby has started on solid food, breastmilk or infant formula is still the most important source of nutrition for babies under 12 months.

How do I know my baby is ready to start solid foods?

Some signs that your baby is ready to start solid foods:

> Can hold their head up and sit with support.
> Able to control their tongue.
> Interested in what others eat; looking, reaching and grabbing for food.
> Seem to want more food, even after a full breastfeed or bottle.

You should start to see these signs around six months of age. Remember that every baby is different and there is no need to rush to start before six months. Starting solid foods too early is not good for your baby. Before four months of age your baby's swallowing skills are not ready to eat safely. Also, the digestive system may not be ready to deal with solid foods. It is also important not to leave it too late to start solid foods.

If you are unsure about whether your baby is ready for solid food talk to your child and family health nurse, doctor or dietitian.
How do I feed my baby?

Start by finding a quiet place where you and your baby can concentrate on what you are about to do. A meal time routine can be started right from the very first solid meal.

Introduce new foods one at a time, starting with small amounts of food after a feed of breastmilk or formula. Wait several days before introducing another food.

Begin with a smooth consistency, over time you can thicken it, and try soft lumps.

Use a ‘baby spoon’ or small teaspoon and offer only half a spoonful at a time. Place the food towards the back of the tongue to make it easier for your baby to move the food back for swallowing.

Babies often push food out of their mouth when they begin solid foods. This does not mean they don’t like the food – they have not yet learnt how to move their tongue to swallow the food.
What do I feed my baby?

Feeding your baby can be divided into stages. This gives you a guide as to what foods to introduce and when. Just remember, babies go through these stages at different rates, so the ages given are just a guide.

As your baby grows and develops the types of foods and the amount they eat will increase. They will become more skilled at eating, so over time you can try different textures. You will notice your baby taking an interest in the food you eat – allow them to explore, touch and taste. This can be messy but babies enjoy this.

Your baby’s diet changes as you gradually introduce different foods, textures and amounts. By around 12 months of age they should be eating foods similar to the family meals. Refer to page 9 for advice on toddler eating.

Preparing food at home from fresh ingredients is the best way to make healthy food for your baby. Fresh foods are not only nutritious, but help your baby learn about colours, textures and the natural flavours of foods.

Try cooking fresh food in larger amounts and freezing in small portions, such as in an ice cube tray. This makes it easy to give your baby healthy meals.

It is better not to rely on pre-packaged foods for all your baby’s meals. Choose pre-packaged foods only sometimes when it is not possible to use home cooked meals. Pre packed foods are safe for babies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>First tastes</td>
<td>Smooth foods around six months to about seven months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to chew</td>
<td>Soft lumps seven months to eight or nine months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-feeding</td>
<td>Finger foods, firmer lumps, eight or nine months to 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family meals</td>
<td>With some changes from 12 months on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First tastes

From around six months babies can start eating smooth foods.

In the beginning offer a breastfeed (or infant formula) first, and then try a small amount of solid food. Start by offering solid food once a day at a time that suits you. Increase to twice a day as your baby gets used to solid foods. It may take many tastes before a new food is accepted – it can be as many as eight to 10 times before a baby accepts a new food happily. There is no evidence to say that giving solids in the afternoon will help your baby sleep through the night. Some good foods to introduce first are:

> **Baby rice cereal**
  Plain baby rice cereal is an ideal first food to try. It is a good source of iron and is easily digested by your baby. Cereal can be made up to the thickness your baby can manage by mixing it with expressed breastmilk, water or formula.

> **Fruit**
  Well mashed soft fruits such as banana, avocado or stewed fruits (eg apple, apricot, pear), can be started once your baby is taking rice cereal well.

> **Vegetables**
  Start with cooked and well mashed potato, pumpkin or sweet potato. Then introduce other vegetables like peas, cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini and carrots. All should be well cooked and mashed to a smooth texture.

> **Meat, chicken and fish**
  Well blended cooked lean meat, poultry and fish are good choices for your baby. Blend them with a stick blender or food processor so they are easy for your baby to swallow. These are high in iron so are important to include in your baby’s diet. Remember babies don’t need added salt or spices in their foods.

> **Custards and yoghurts**
  ‘Baby’ yoghurts and custards are a good choice as they are often lower in added sugar. You can also use a full fat, low sugar regular yoghurt. Small amounts of cow’s milk containing foods can be included in your baby’s diet, however, cow’s milk should not be used as the main drink for your baby until around 12 months of age.

After starting with soft, smooth foods it is **very important** to move onto the next stage; learning to chew soft foods.
Learning to chew

From seven months babies can start eating soft foods with lumps.

Most babies can manage thicker textures and soft lumps soon after starting solid foods. Once your baby can sit alone and make chewing movements they can start to bite and chew, even if they don’t have teeth. When giving foods with lumps, your baby may spit it out or even gag the first few times.

Gagging is a normal part of learning to eat and it usually frightens the parents more than the baby!

This does not mean they are not ready, they just need to keep practising. Continue to offer lumpier textures and pieces of soft food. The chewing action helps to develop your baby’s muscles for eating and talking.

Your baby can start trying to drink from a cup at six months of age. Use tap water, expressed breastmilk or formula. Some good foods and textures to progress to at this stage are:

> **Other grains**

Baby cereals or breakfast type cereals can also be included for variety, such as Weet-bix™ or porridge. Soften with expressed breastmilk, formula or a small amount of cow’s milk.

> **Fruit and vegetables**

Fruit and vegetables can progress from mashed to soft lumps to help your baby learn to chew. Try ripe or lightly cooked fruit, mashed, diced or grated – eg ripe banana, avocado, mashed stewed fruit, grated apple. Choose mashed or diced cooked vegetables – eg zucchini, pumpkin or sweet potato.

> **Egg**

Whole egg can be given. Egg is a good source of protein. Make sure it is well cooked, such as scrambled or hard-boiled and mashed.

> **Dairy**

Try yoghurts with soft lumps or grated cheese in cooking.
> **Meat**
Try minced meat, finely chopped chicken, flaked fish or canned tuna.

> **Vegetarian**
If you and your baby are vegetarian it is important to include other sources of protein and iron such as mashed, well cooked legumes, lentils, beans, wholemeal breads, cereals, and eggs. For more ideas talk to your child and family health nurse, dietitian or doctor.

**Self-feeding**
From eight months babies can start eating finger foods and firmer lumps. Babies are learning to feed themselves. Encourage their effort. This is a messy but important step.

At around nine months of age your baby may be having solid food three times a day, along with breast or infant formula feeds. Offer pieces of food to hold and help self-feeding. Remember to always watch your baby while they eat and avoid foods that may cause choking. For advice on how to prevent choking see page 20.

**Family meals**
From 12 months onwards your baby can move on to healthy foods that the rest of your family eat. See recipes on page 29.
Finger food ideas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bread and other cereals</th>
<th>Fruit and vegetables</th>
<th>Meats and protein foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Strips of bread or toast (spreads such as cream cheese will make them softer and a little easier to manage)</td>
<td>&gt; Avocado</td>
<td>&gt; Strips of well cooked, lean beef, lamb and chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Tiny sandwiches with avocado, Vegemite™ or ricotta cheese</td>
<td>&gt; Large sticks of rockmelon/watermelon with seeds removed</td>
<td>&gt; Pieces of soft cooked meats eg from casseroles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Cooked pasta shapes eg spiral shapes provide easy grip for little hands</td>
<td>&gt; Banana rings or chunks</td>
<td>&gt; Canned fish eg tuna, salmon (mix with mashed potato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Pikelets</td>
<td>&gt; Orange, mandarin segments with peel removed</td>
<td>&gt; Cubes of tofu (bean curd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Rusks</td>
<td>&gt; Canned fruit eg diced mixed fruit, peach slices</td>
<td>&gt; Meat or fish patties. Cooked meat or fish can be finely chopped and mixed with mashed potato then shaped into balls or patties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Savoury biscuits with spreads eg rice crackers</td>
<td>&gt; Grated or soft stewed apple, pear</td>
<td>&gt; Boiled or scrambled egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Grapes cut into quarters with skins and seeds removed</td>
<td>&gt; Sticks/grated cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Stone fruit eg plums, Nectarines, remove tough skin and stone</td>
<td>&gt; Baked beans or other cooked beans</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Strawberries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Soft cooked carrot, broccoli, cauliflower pieces</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Soft cooked vegetable cubes or pieces eg pumpkin, potato, zucchini, broccoli</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Thick mashed potato (try rolling into balls)</td>
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Normal toddler eating behaviour

The toddler years are a time for learning and discovery on many levels. Toddlers are learning about new foods at a time when life long eating practices are often established. Teaching toddlers healthy eating habits can help them grow up to be healthy adults.

Toddlers and eating – important things to know:

Toddlers grow more slowly than babies. In the first 12 months babies are growing very fast. As toddlers aren’t growing as quickly, their appetite often drops.

It is normal for toddlers’ appetites to vary from day to day and even from meal to meal. If they don’t eat at a particular meal or snack time, the next time to eat is not far away. It’s ok for them to wait to eat until then.

We sometimes have unrealistic ideas about how much a toddler should eat. Toddlers have small tummies. They need to eat small amounts often. Toddlers will often eat small meals and snacks throughout the day, eg three small meals and two to three snacks.

Children are good at knowing when they are hungry and when they are full. They can easily lose this skill if they are pushed to eat more than they want or are forced to finish everything on their plate. If your toddler refuses food, they have either had enough or aren’t hungry. Most toddlers, even ‘fussy eaters’ eat enough to meet their needs.

It is common for toddlers to go through ‘food fads,’ where they want to eat one or a few types of foods only. Be patient as these fads will often change.

Toddlers are developing their big and small movement skills. They are learning new skills all the time. This happens through play and exploring their world. Sometimes there are just more exciting things to do than eat.
Food for toddlers

For good nutrition, toddlers need to eat a range of foods. Foods should be similar to the rest of the family, without adding extra sugars, fats or salt.

The following table shows food groups and serve sizes for your toddler. Remember small child serves have been used to allow for small tummies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food group</th>
<th>Serves per day</th>
<th>Example of one child serve</th>
<th>Provides</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles | At least four child serves per day | > 1 slice of bread or ½ bread roll  
> 2 large plain cracker biscuits  
> 1 breakfast biscuit eg WeetbixTM  
> ½ cup breakfast cereal or ¼ cup muesli  
> ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or noodles  
> 1 small pancake | carbohydrates, protein, fibre, folate, B vitamins, iron | Choose wholemeal/wholegrain products where possible  
When comparing breakfast cereals, choose those with less added sugar (compare using the total sugar/100g on the nutrition panel for each cereal) |
| Vegetables, legumes              | At least two child serves per day | > 1 cup salad  
> 1 small potato or ½ cup mashed potato  
> ½ cup cooked vegetables  
> ½ cup cooked dried beans, peas, lentils, baked beans | vitamins, minerals, fibre and carbohydrates | Offer a variety of vegetables of different colours each day.  
They contain different minerals, vitamins and protective factors for good health and development |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food group</th>
<th>Serves per day</th>
<th>Example of one child serve</th>
<th>Provides</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fruit</strong></td>
<td>At least one child serve per day</td>
<td>&gt; 1 banana or apple or orange&lt;br&gt; &gt; 1 slice melon or 2 small fruits eg apricots, plums&lt;br&gt; &gt; 1 cup canned/stewed fruit&lt;br&gt; &gt; Dried fruit eg 4 dried apricot halves&lt;br&gt; &gt; 1 ½ tablespoons sultanas&lt;br&gt; &gt; ½ cup fruit juice (served with meals) and limit to 1 serve daily</td>
<td>vitamins, carbohydrates and fibre</td>
<td>Fresh fruit is a better choice than fruit juice (hard, raw fruit such as apple should not be given to children under four years of age as they are at risk of choking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milk, yoghurt, cheese</strong></td>
<td>At least three child serves per day</td>
<td>&gt; ½ cup (125ml) of full cream/reduced fat milk or a breastfeed&lt;br&gt; &gt; ½ cup calcium fortified soy milk&lt;br&gt; &gt; ½ cup custard&lt;br&gt; &gt; 1 small tub of yoghurt (100g)&lt;br&gt; &gt; 20g cheese / 1 slice of processed cheese / 1/3 cup grated cheese</td>
<td>calcium, protein, riboflavin and vitamin B12 fat</td>
<td>Children less than two years of age need <strong>full cream milk</strong> and milk products. This is to ensure they get the extra fat for their growth and development during this period. <strong>Reduced fat milk</strong> (1–2g fat/100ml) and reduced fat milk products should be started for children after two years of age. <strong>Skim milk</strong> (less than 0.15g fat/100ml) can be given to children after five years of age. Choose lean meats, trim excess fat and cook in minimal amounts of fat (eg oil, margarine, butter). Remove fish bones. <em>Do not give whole nuts or other similar foods to children under four years of age as they are at risk of choking.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em><em>Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts</em>, legumes</em>*</td>
<td>At least two child serves per day</td>
<td>&gt; 1–2 slices cooked lean meat, fish or chicken&lt;br&gt; &gt; ¼ cup cooked stew, casserole or mince&lt;br&gt; &gt; 1–2 slices ham or beef&lt;br&gt; &gt; 2 fish fingers or 1 sausage (occasionally only)&lt;br&gt; &gt; 1 egg&lt;br&gt; &gt; 2 tablespoons smooth peanut butter&lt;br&gt; &gt; ¼ cup cooked dried beans, peas, lentils, baked beans</td>
<td>protein, iron, zinc, niacin and vitamin B12</td>
<td><em>Do not give whole nuts or other similar foods to children under four years of age as they are at risk of choking.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Example menu for toddlers

This is a guide only. Toddlers will take different amounts from one day to the next.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal</th>
<th>Food choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>one breakfast biscuit eg Weetbix™, Vitabrits™ or porridge and ½ cup full cream milk*&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;one slice toast with margarine and spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>one medium piece of soft fruit cut into fingers or wedges&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;four small crackers (Salada™, Premium™)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>half a cup baked beans and one slice bread or toast&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;cold meat eg ham or tomato and cheese sandwich&lt;br&gt;baked potato with baked beans and cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>one small tub yoghurt (100g)*&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;one slice fruit bread with margarine&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;one piece fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>two thin slices of roast meat, chopped, half a cup mashed potato and pieces of steamed broccoli, carrot and pumpkin&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;one cup pasta and bolognase sauce and half a cup mixed vegetables&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;Stir-fry vegetables and meat and half a cup noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>half a cup (125ml) custard*&lt;br&gt;AND/OR&lt;br&gt;diced/tinned fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluid</td>
<td>two or three breastfeeds if breastfeeding&lt;br&gt;Up to two or three drinks of milk, especially if not choosing diary options above*&lt;br&gt;Tap water should be freely available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Children less than two years of age need full cream milk and milk products. For other meal ideas see the Recipe section.
Snack ideas

> Fresh or tinned fruit (in natural juice)
> Soft vegetable sticks – lightly steam potato, carrot, celery, beans to soften
> Rice crackers and cheese
> Wholemeal pikelets
> Fruit bun, raisin bread or pikelets spread lightly with margarine
> Fruit muffin
> Scone with margarine and jam
> English muffin with margarine and cheese or peanut butter
> Corn or rice cakes with peanut butter, mashed banana, eg Vegemite™ spread or cheese
> Mini pizzas using English muffins as the base
> Small tub yoghurt
> Bread fingers (toast cut into fingers) or crackers and lightly spread with peanut butter, mashed avocado, yeast spread or ricotta cheese
> Cheese stick or triangle and sultanas
> Small can baked beans or spaghetti
> Slice of toasted wholegrain bread topped with ricotta cheese and fruit spread
> Fruit kebabs – cubes of fruit onto bamboo skewers (remember to remove any sharp points on the skewer).

Do not give popcorn, nuts, hard lollies, corn chips, hard fruits, hard vegetables or other similar food to children under four years of age as they are at risk of choking.
Tips for managing mealtimes

What parents can do
There are lots of things parents can do to help toddlers try new foods and make learning to eat a fun time. Talk to them about what you want them to do rather than insisting they eat.

Offer food in a relaxed, happy environment
Make the focus enjoying food and company. Children tend to like foods they link with fun. Try to eat together as a family. Set up some family food rituals for example pancakes for Sunday breakfast.

Set a good example
Children learn by watching you. Let them see you enjoy healthy foods and they’ll be encouraged to try them too. Keep foods in the house that you want children to eat and reduce those that you don’t. If children can’t see ‘junk foods’, they’re less likely to ask for them. Be aware that children are influenced by the food ads they see on television. Your toddler may not have the same eating pattern as you. Follow their lead and be patient.

Be prepared for mess
Toddlers are still developing their eating skills. The more they practice the better they will get. Encourage their effort. If you get frustrated with them they will become stressed and it will be harder for them to develop eating skills.

Remove distractions
Toddlers are easily distracted at meal times. Turn off the television, put pets outside and tidy away toys so children can focus on the meal.

Avoid rewards, bribes and punishments around food
For example, ‘If you eat all your vegetables you can have ice-cream for dessert’. This only makes dessert more desirable than vegetables, which isn’t a message we want to give. Never force your toddler to eat.
Avoid negative messages about food
Don’t talk about foods as being ‘good’ or bad’. There is a place for all foods in a healthy diet. ‘Everyday’ foods from the five food groups (breads and cereals, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, meat and meat alternatives) should make up the bulk of the diet.

‘Sometimes’ foods (eg biscuits, cordial, soft drinks) should be eaten less often as part of an overall healthy diet.

Offer new foods often
Toddlers are often wary of trying new foods. Follow their cues on what and how much to eat. It can take up to 10 times of being offered a food before they will accept it. Give small amounts to try at first but don’t pressure your toddler. Be persistent in offering them foods but not pushy.

Be patient and keep calm
If your toddler refuses food, remain calm and try not to react. Make eye contact. If they see you getting worked up about their eating, they quickly learn it’s an easy ‘button’ to push with you. Don’t fuss, just remove the food and finish the meal time. Your toddler does not realise how much effort you have put into preparing their meal. Try not to take this personally. If your toddler is going through a fussy stage, keep meals simple. Having realistic expectations on how little food toddlers need to eat will help reduce your stress levels.

Toddlers like choice too
Toddlers should be allowed to select their own food sometimes. Offer a choice of no more than two foods. Remember, if they have made a choice and refuse to eat it, don’t make them another meal. Wait until the next meal or snack time. They may enjoy eating their meal together with the rest of the family.
Fluids

Breastmilk

Many toddlers are breastfeeding. Don’t be in a rush to give it up.

A toddler may be having three meals, snacks and breastfeeds. However if your toddler is not interested in solid foods they may be filling up on too much breastmilk. They may not have room to eat other foods.

This can lead to them missing out on important nutrients. If this is the case you can cut back on the number of breastfeeds.

If you would like further information, speak to your child and family health nurse, dietitian or visit the Australian Breastfeeding Association website: www.breastfeeding.asn.au.

Other drinks

The only drinks children need to consume for good health are water (tap water is best) and milk (a maximum of 500mL per day). Drinking too much of other fluids (like fruit juice, soft drinks and cordials) can make toddlers feel full and mean they are less likely to try new foods. This could make meal times a challenge. It can also lead to the development of overweight/obesity due to the extra energy (kilojoules/calories) they are drinking.

Drinking too much milk may also lead to iron deficiency as children may fill up on milk and not have room to eat iron-rich foods. Drinking too much juice can give toddlers runny, loose poos (toddler diarrhoea).

To avoid these problems, keep an eye on the amount of drinks your child consumes in a day.

> Provide a maximum of 500mL of milk per day. Toddlers less than two years of age should have full cream milk. Reduced fat milk should be started for toddlers after two years of age. Skim milk can be given to children after five years of age.

> Sweetened drinks are unnecessary. Only offer these on special occasions and resist having them in the house.

> If your toddler drinks fruit juice only offer one small glass (125mls) a day of diluted fruit juice.

> Encourage them to drink water. Remember that the best drink for children (and adults) is tap water – so start by setting a good example yourself and always have water available for all the family.

> ‘Toddler milks’ often known as ‘toddler formula’ are not needed.
Caring for teeth

Tooth decay may occur in toddlers that frequently suck on or fall asleep with bottles of fluids containing sugars such as milk, cordial or juice. Encourage your toddler to drink from a cup. Wean your toddler from the bottle if they are still using one by 12 months.

Fluoride helps to protect the teeth from decay and tap water has fluoride in it. Too many sweets, lollies and sticky dried fruit (sultanas, fruit straps) can also contribute to tooth decay, so offer these foods only sometimes and in small amounts.

As soon as teeth appear, clean them with a soft cloth or a small soft brush. Your toddler will soon want to brush their own teeth, but will need your help until they are about eight years old. From birth to 18 months you don’t need to use toothpaste, only from 18 months on you can use a little low fluoride or children’s toothpaste (just a smear to start with). Encourage your toddler to spit this out rather than swallow it and there is no need to rinse. From six years you can use an adult toothpaste.

For more information on caring for your toddler’s teeth contact the South Australian Dental Service if you live in South Australia or your local public dental health service. Refer to the ‘Where to go for help’ section on page 62.
Food safety

Hygiene
Food should always be prepared in a clean kitchen. Always wash your hands and use clean equipment when preparing, serving or storing your food.

Foods like meat, chicken, fish and eggs should be well cooked. Fruit and vegetables should be washed or peeled before use.

Dairy foods should always be pasteurised, not ‘fresh’ from the farm. Always use products before their use-by date.

Regular honey should not be given to babies under 12 months, as it can cause an illness called botulism. Some baby foods may contain ‘sterilised honey’ and this is safe.

If using pre-packaged canned foods or food defrosted from the freezer, take only as much as you are going to use at the time. Store any extra in a clean, covered container in the fridge. Use it by the end of the next day.

If food has been offered but not eaten, it is important to handle and store it correctly to avoid poisoning. These guidelines will help you to decide what to do with uneaten food. Do not keep food out in high temperatures. If food has been kept out at room temperature:

> for two hours or less – put it in the fridge or eat it straight away
> for more than two hours (but less than four hours) – eat it straight away
> for more than four hours – throw it out.
Prevent choking

Choking is a risk for babies and young children under four years of age because they:

> put small objects into their mouths
> do not have the back teeth needed to chew and grind lumps of food fully
> are still learning to eat, chew and swallow
> may run, play, laugh or cry while there is something in their mouth.

How can I make eating safer for my child?

At eating times:

> Always stay with your baby or toddler and supervise them while eating.
> Make sure that they sit quietly while eating. If your baby or toddler is playing, laughing, or crying wait until they settle before offering food.
> Never force them to eat as this may cause them to choke.

Food:

Some foods should not be offered to babies or toddlers because they can be unsafe. Don’t give the following foods to babies and toddlers:

> Food that can break off into hard pieces. For example, avoid raw carrot and celery sticks, apple pieces and whole grapes. These foods should be cut up, grated, cooked or mashed.
> Sausages, frankfurts and other meats should be cut into small pieces. Tough skins on frankfurts and other sausages should be removed. Check fish for bones and remove any.
> Popcorn, nuts, hard lollies, corn chips or other similar foods.

Consider doing a first aid course. This can give you the skills to help in a situation where your child is choking or where other first aid care is needed.
Food allergies

Food allergies have become more common in recent years. Allergies tend to run in families.

Symptoms of food allergy include:

> **Local reactions** – for example a red rash around the mouth where the food has touched the skin.

> **General reactions** – skin rashes on other parts of the body, hives, swellings, vomiting, wheezing or other breathing problems, or in rare cases, collapse.

*Note: If there are severe symptoms including breathing difficulties or collapse, call 000 for an ambulance.*

If you think your baby or toddler has a food allergy stop giving the food you think is causing the reaction. See your doctor to help you identify the cause and work out a plan of action. A referral to a specialist might be required.

If there is a strong history of allergies in the family, talk to your doctor or paediatrician (child doctor) to discuss what might reduce the risk of your child having food allergies.

If there is a family history of allergies:

> do not delay starting solid foods after six months
> do not avoid foods that often cause allergies.

This area is being researched and recommendations are changing as we learn more about it. If you have any concerns contact your doctor.
Healthy weight

Overweight and obesity is not just a problem in adults. More children, including toddlers are becoming overweight. This is a concern because it can cause lots of problems with health and self esteem, both now and later in life. Parents often don’t realise their child is overweight. It’s important to have your child’s growth checked. The earlier overweight is identified, the more likely this can be reversed.

Toddlers should be active every day. Keep play simple and fun. Try to get everyone involved. Avoid games with lots of rules, winners and losers.

Like healthy eating, toddlers learn about play and exercise from watching you. You can let them lead the play and encourage their efforts. Show them that you enjoy playing with them.

If you have concerns about your child’s weight, seek advice from your doctor, dietitian or child and family health nurse.

Always supervise your toddler while they are playing and take part yourself.

Some simple ideas for being active:

- Take your toddler to the local playground, gardens, or park.
- Take your toddler for a walk or bike ride.
- Keep a balloon in the air by continually tapping it up.
- Teach your toddler to swim.
- Stand in a circle, kick a soft ball to one another and gradually get further apart.
- Create an obstacle course, inside or out and hurry through it.
- Contact your local council or community group for details of playgroups or kindergyms near you.
- Limit the time spent watching television or the computer screen.
Frequently asked questions

Can I introduce my baby to solid foods before six months?
It is best to wait until around six months of age as your baby’s digestive system is not mature and may not be ready to cope with foods other than breastmilk or infant formula. Their swallowing is unlikely to be co-ordinated enough to manage food and this makes extra work for your baby’s kidneys.

Until six months of age breastmilk or infant formula meets all of your baby’s needs. However, from around six months of age your baby will need extra iron from food. Look for the signs that your baby is ready but do not start before four months.

Do I need to add anything to my baby’s food?
Babies enjoy foods that might taste bland to adults. There is no need to add extra sugars, fats or salt. Eating foods without additions allows your baby to identify new tastes, and enjoy the natural flavours of healthy foods.

How do I know that my baby is eating enough?
Babies are very responsive to their own needs and feelings of hunger and fullness. While breastfeeding or bottle feeding, you have been relying on your baby to let you know how much they need. This doesn’t change when solid foods are introduced.

Initially offer small amounts and increase as tolerated. It is best to let your baby decide how much to eat at any meal.

When babies have had enough to eat they let you know by:
> turning their head away
> losing interest in what they are eating
> pushing the food away
> closing their mouth
> gagging
> starting to cry and showing signs of distress.

It is important to remember that your baby’s appetite can vary from meal to meal and day to day. Never force or pressure your baby to eat. Feed at your baby’s pace and stop when they let you know they have had enough.
What if my baby rejects food?

Eating solid foods is a new experience and it can take a few attempts before your baby becomes familiar with the taste and texture of solid foods. Don’t be upset if your baby spits the food out. This doesn’t mean they don’t like it.

Babies need to learn how to move their tongue in the way needed to swallow solids. At the beginning their tongue may push the food out – this is not a sign that they do not like the food.

What does baby-led weaning mean?

‘Baby-led weaning’ is a different way of introducing solid foods.

Baby-led weaning skips the smooth and lumpy stages of introducing solids (where a parent would feed the baby with a spoon) and instead lets babies self feed with finger foods from around six months. Babies begin by picking up and licking the food, before moving on to chewing and swallowing.

In the beginning very little food is actually swallowed. We don’t know if babies fed this way always get what they need, as solids are needed in a baby’s diet from around six months to provide important nutrients for growth and development, such as iron, zinc, protein and energy.

Babies also learn different skills at different stages of eating. Offering a range of different foods and textures allows your baby to learn important skills like:

> eating from a spoon
> using the different muscles in their mouth
> finger feeding
> swallowing lumpy foods without gagging
> using a spoon, fork or cup on their own.

All babies need to learn how to feed themselves. It is important not to ‘get stuck’ on only feeding your baby smooth foods. Encourage your baby’s attempts to self feed by offering them a spoon to hold to lick or suck food from. Offer lumpy and finger foods for baby to explore when they are ready (see page 9 for ideas). Remember to offer safe foods to prevent choking and always supervise your baby when eating (see page 20 for more information).
When and how do I introduce eggs?

There is no need to be worried about the introduction of egg into your child's diet if they do not have any known food allergies. Small amounts of well cooked egg may be introduced around the time you introduce meat. There is no need to separate the yolk from the white.

If your child has existing food allergies speak to your doctor about introducing egg and other foods into their diet.

My baby is constipated – what can I do?

First it is important to check if your baby really is constipated. Constipation is when your baby's poo is hard pebbles, dry and difficult to pass. Talk to your doctor or child and family health nurse if you are not sure.

Constipation may occur when starting solid foods, especially if there is less breastmilk or formula being taken. When starting solid foods, it is a good time to introduce tap water in a cup. Offer fruit, vegetables, legumes and wholemeal breads and cereals. Do not use added bran. If you continue to have concerns, discuss this with your doctor, child and family health nurse or dietitian.

Are spicy foods harmful?

If your family likes to cook with herbs and spices, it's possible to gradually introduce them to your baby. Once tolerating a range of food most babies can tolerate mild herbs and spices. Food made with hot spices, such as chillies may cause discomfort.

My twelve month-old baby won’t swallow meat – he chews and chews and then spits it out – what can I do?

Many babies find chewing meat difficult. Others keep chewing until the meat becomes too dry to swallow. Try to serve moist meat dishes such as casseroles, stews, mince dishes or thinly sliced, slowly cooked, roast meat. Also try alternatives such as baked beans, tofu, nut loaf and lentil burgers.

Tiredness may also lead to slow chewing so try serving meat at lunch. Reheating the family meal from the night before is fine. Do not worry if your child does not swallow the meat. He or she is still learning to chew and getting used to the taste of meat which is an important step.
I have heard some types of fish are high in mercury – what fish can my child have?

Fish is an important part of a healthy diet. Fish contains protein, omega 3 fats, iodine and other vitamins and minerals. These are good for heart health and children’s proper growth and development. Nearly all fish and seafood contains mercury. Yet some types of fish contain higher amounts of mercury. Too much mercury may harm a young child’s developing nervous system. Follow these guidelines so your child gets all the goodness from fish, but reduces the exposure to mercury:

> Limit the intake of shark (flake) or billfish (broadbill, swordfish and marlin) to no more than one child serve per fortnight, with no other fish eaten during that fortnight.
> Limit the intake of orange roughy (also sold as sea perch) and catfish to no more than one child serve per week, with no other fish eaten during that week.
> Allow one to three child serves per week of any fish that is not listed above (eg tuna, salmon, pollock, shrimp, hake or hoki).

A child serve is around 75gm or three fish fingers.

For more information about mercury in fish see the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) website: www.foodstandards.gov.au.

What do I do if my toddler refuses their dinner?

If your toddler refuses the family meal at dinner time, you don’t need to make another meal. If your toddler will not eat the food that is offered, then you can let them know when the next meal time will be. Some toddlers will have a snack before bedtime, others may be happy to wait until breakfast tomorrow. This will do no harm.

My two year old daughter will only eat jam or vegemite sandwiches – what can I do?

It is common for toddlers to have food fads and at this time they may only eat one thing for lunch every day for a week or more. Be patient and continue to offer a variety of foods in small amounts.
My toddler will not drink water?

The best drink for your family is tap water.

You can help your toddler by:

> setting a good example by drinking water yourself
> trying a special cup or water bottle
> **always** having water available at meal times and for snacks
> **not** keeping sweet drinks in the house and do not drink them yourself. If your toddler is already used to sweet drinks, start to reduce this now and offer them watered down. Your toddler may be upset at first but will get used to it if you continue
> being patient. This may take time, particularly if your toddler is in the habit of wanting juice or cordial whenever they are thirsty or hungry.

I am worried about my toddler’s eating

Many parents worry about their toddlers’ eating at some stage, particularly in younger children when food intake and appetite appear to change daily. In most cases everything is usually fine.

See your doctor or child and family health nurse if:

> you have concerns about your toddler’s growth
> your toddler is unwell, tired and not eating
> meal times are causing lots of stress and anxiety
> you are worried about ongoing food refusal and their weight.
When my toddler goes to child care they eat really well but not at home – what can I do?

You could explore with the child care what your toddler is eating, what meals and snacks they provide and try these at home too. If having a ‘main meal’ at lunch they may not need anything large when they come home, perhaps a snack or sandwich or some yoghurt and fruit. If they have had a busy day at child care they possibly will be quite tired and not interested in food.

Toddlers tend to enjoy eating with other children and may therefore eat a lot more when at child care than at home. If your toddler is eating on their own at home it may help to sit down together as a family when eating to encourage shared eating like they do at child care.

When my toddler goes to grandma’s house they eat badly, what can I do?

Check with grandma what is being offered. It depends on how often they go to grandmas’. If not very often it is probably not something to be overly concerned about. Toddlers and children soon learn that they experience different things with different people/places.

Discuss what your concerns are and how you feel, as grandma may not realise you are worried or upset by what they are giving your toddler. Negotiate diet and meals to be given with grandma.
Recipes


The recipes are planned for the whole family. They can be modified in textures by blending or mashing. You may leave out or reduce spices for the younger baby.

As a guide to the texture, follow:

❯ **First tastes**: smooth foods – from six months on.
❯ **Learning to chew**: soft lumps as the next stage from seven months on.
❯ **Self feeding**: as finger foods from about eight months onwards when they can hold the food easily in their hands.
❯ **Family meals**: from 12 months on you can follow the recipe to suit your family. You may just need to cut up the meal in small bite size pieces for your toddler.
Fruit and vegetables

Boiled/steamed or microwaved fruit or vegetables

Wash, peel and core the apple or pear (or other fruit). Cut into slices or dice. Put in saucepan with a little water (or steam in a steamer). Cook gently for five to 10 minutes till soft. Add more water if it is getting dry. Drain in colander.

Frozen vegetables are just as good as fresh vegetables. Cook as directed on the packet. Microwave ovens are useful as fruit and vegetables cook well and quickly with little or no water needed. The smaller the quantity the less time it takes to cook. Do not overcook, experiment to find the right time. Make sure the food has cooled enough before giving to your baby.

Grated fruit and vegetables can be served raw:

> on their own
> mixed with grated cheese
> mixed with cottage cheese
> try grated carrot and apple with yoghurt

Popular fresh fruit mash combinations:

> apple and pear – stewed or tinned
> pear and peach – stewed or tinned
> peaches and apricots – stewed or tinned
> banana and melon
> avocado and banana
> avocado and apple – stewed or grated

Popular vegetable mash combinations:

> zucchini and potato – one medium potato and one medium zucchini
> parsnip, sweet potato and spinach – one medium parsnip, one small sweet potato and 20g baby spinach leaves (trim stems with scissors prior to cooking)
> carrot and pumpkin – two carrots and a wedge of butternut pumpkin
> cauliflower and potato – 250g cauliflower florets and one potato
> pumpkin, sweet potatoes and broccoli
> pumpkin, carrot and apple
> cauliflower, pumpkin and carrot
> avocado and pumpkin
Baked potatoes

1. Wash well.
2. Cook in a moderate oven for one to one and a half hours.
3. Test with skewer to see if they are done.
4. Cut open; take out insides and mash. Good with other vegetables or cheese.

Vegetable soup

1. Put one cup of chopped vegetables in a saucepan.
2. Add two cups of water and one tablespoon of rice or pasta.
3. Bring to the boil and simmer until vegetables are well cooked.
4. Puree or mash – do not drain.

Vegetable patties

1. Mix grated vegetables (potato, carrot, pumpkin, zucchini) with cereal (breadcrumbs, rolled oats, wholemeal flour) and an egg.
2. Mould into patties and fry in a little olive oil.
3. To vary this, add a small cooked fish fillet, or some tinned salmon or tuna to the mixture.
4. Or add cooked minced meat.

Potato pancakes

1. Combine all ingredients and cook in pan with a small amount of olive oil.
2. Cook both sides for 10 minutes.
Foods for babies and toddlers

Pumpkin soup

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Pumpkin soup

- 1 butternut pumpkin cubed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable stock powder
- 1–2 teaspoons nutmeg
- 375ml tin light evaporated milk

1. Boil the pumpkin until cooked.
2. Add the stock powder and nutmeg.
3. Remove half of the water and set aside.
4. Blend pumpkin in a food processor then add evaporated milk.
5. If required, add some of the water set aside to achieve desired thickness.
6. Stir well to mix over a low heat.

Sweet potato and apple

- 1 small sweet potato
- 1 apple peeled and sliced
- 1 tablespoon apple juice

1. Steam apple and sweet potato until tender.
2. Mash with juice.
3. Add ricotta cheese to change the texture.
Bread

Rusks

1. Use slices of bread about one cm thick. Use white or wholemeal bread, but not multigrain.
2. Cut into strips.
3. Place on oven tray.
4. Bread can be lightly spread with margarine or olive oil before baking.
5. Bake in a very slow oven about one and a half to two hours or until dry and a light brown colour.

Sandwiches

Tiny sandwiches with avocado, Vegemite™ or ricotta cheese are good for finger foods.
Pasta and rice

**Risotto**

- ¼ onion peeled and chopped (optional)
- ½ cup Arborio rice
- 1 ½ cups diluted unsalted chicken stock
- 1 cup pumpkin
- 2 tbsp grated cheese

1. Fry onion in a small amount of olive oil.
2. Add rice and cook for two minutes.
3. Stir in chicken stock and pumpkin.
4. Reduce heat and cook.
5. Add extra water if needed until rice is tender.
6. Remove from heat and stir in cheese.

**Pumpkin risotto**

- 1 teaspoon of olive oil
- ½ cup Arborio rice (or long grain rice)
- 1 ½ cups diluted salt reduced chicken stock (or just hot water if preferred)
- ¼ onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 cup grated pumpkin (can also use zucchini, mashed peas or finely chopped broccoli)
- 2 tablespoon grated parmesan cheese

1. Lightly fry the onion in butter.
2. Add rice and cook for two minutes, stirring continuously.
3. Stir through chicken stock and pumpkin.
4. Reduce the heat and cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Once all the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender (adding more water if necessary), remove from heat and stir through the parmesan before serving.
Chicken and vegetable risoni

- 100g chicken mince
- 1 small red capsicum, finely chopped
- 1 large zucchini, finely chopped
- 310g tin creamed corn kernels
- 400g tin crushed peeled tomatoes, undrained
- 2 tablespoons risoni

1. In a lightly oiled pan, cook chicken for five minutes or until brown.
2. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
3. Cook capsicum in the same pan over medium heat, stirring for three minutes.
4. Add corn and zucchini; cook, stirring, for two minutes.
5. Add tomatoes; cook stirring until vegetables soften.
6. Combine with cooked chicken.
7. Cook risoni in boiling water until tender and drain.
8. Toss risoni with one third cup of chicken and vegetable mixture.
9. Blend or process until smooth for younger babies.
Foods for babies and toddlers

Chicken and vegetable risoni
**Vegetable lasagne**

- 4–6 instant lasagne sheets
- 1 stick celery
- 1 onion minced
- 1 cup mushroom, sliced
- 250g packet frozen spinach, thawed
- ½ cup zucchini, diced
- 1 capsicum, diced
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 400g tin diced tomatoes
- 400g tin tomato soup
- ½ tablespoon dried parsley flakes
- 2 garlic cloves crushed
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- ½ cup grated cheese
- 1 teaspoon mixed herbs

1. In a pot, combine tinned tomatoes, tomato soup, tomato paste, mushrooms, celery, zucchini, spinach, capsicum, herbs, parsley and garlic.
2. Simmer until well cooked.
3. Add the mixed frozen vegetables and allow to cook for another two minutes.
4. In an oven-proof dish, layer sauce between lasagne sheets.
5. Cover with foil and bake at 180°C for 35–40 minutes.
6. Sprinkle with cheese and serve.
Macaroni cheese

> ½ cup of small, cooked pasta shapes
> 3 tablespoons white sauce
> 2 tablespoons grated cheese

1. Place pasta in a bowl.
2. Add sauce and cheese and stir through.
3. If required, reheat in the microwave on 50% power.
4. Stir to disperse any hot spots and check food temperature before serving.

White sauce

> 1 ¼ cups milk
> 2 tablespoons cornflour

1. Bring 1 cup of milk to the boil, reduce heat to low.
2. Blend together cornflour and remaining milk.
3. Add blended cornflour to hot milk, mixing thoroughly.
4. Return to low heat and cook until sauce thickens, stirring constantly.
5. Use as required or freeze in ice cube trays.

For a variation add grated zucchini or carrot or diced frozen mixed vegetables.
Cheesy veggie pasta bake

- 250g penne pasta
- 2 cups mixed frozen vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cauliflower and carrot mix)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- ½ bunch spinach, chopped
- 420g tin corn kernels
- ½ teaspoon mustard
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ cup plain flour
- 1 cup milk
- 420g tin tomato soup
- 400g tin diced tomatoes
- 1 cup grated cheese

1. Cook pasta according to packet directions.
3. Heat oil in pan and cook onion and spinach until tender.
4. Add mustard, paprika and flour, cook stirring over low heat.
5. Gradually add in milk and soup, stir until mixture boils and thickens.
6. Add diced tomatoes, cook and stir until mixture is hot.
7. Stir pasta, steamed frozen vegetables, corn and three quarters of the cheese into the tomato mixture. Put into baking dish.
8. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese and bake at 180°C until cheese is melted.
**Spaghetti bake**

- 300g uncooked spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons crushed garlic
- 1 onion diced
- 500g lean beef mince
- 3/4 cup grated carrot
- 3/4 cup celery thinly slice
- 3/4 medium capsicum diced
- 2x 400g tinned tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese
- 3/4 cup grated tasty cheese
- Pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Cook spaghetti according to packet directions.
3. Drain and set aside.
4. In a large lightly oiled non stick frying pan, sauté onion and garlic for one minute.
5. Add mince, combine and cook until brown.
6. Add carrot, celery, capsicum, tinned tomatoes, pepper and cook for three minutes.
7. Fold in cooked spaghetti combining well with mince sauce.
8. Pour into an oven proof dish.
9. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 35 minutes.
Lentils

**Boston bean bake**

- 4 eggs
- 1 onion
- 440g tin baked beans
- 125g cheese, grated

- 2 carrots, diced
- ½ packet frozen spinach
- 2 teaspoons mixed herbs
- Breadcrumbs, as needed

1. Sauté the onion in a lightly oiled pan.
2. Add all ingredients to a large bowl (adding enough breadcrumbs to make a thick mixture).
3. Mix together with cleaned, washed hands.
4. Put baking paper onto a tray.
5. Place mixture onto the tray. Press flat (about 3–4cm thick).
6. Bake in oven at 180°C for approximately 40 minutes or until firm.
7. Remove from tray immediately onto wire racks (to prevent the bottom from getting soggy).
8. Cool before slicing.
9. Serve with salad or cooked vegetables.

This makes an ideal lunch box snack.
Dhal for baby

> ½ cup red lentils
> Oil for sauté
> 1 small onion, chopped
> 1 teaspoon grated ginger
> 1 garlic clove, crushed
> 1¼ cups water
> 1 small sweet potato
> ½ teaspoon coriander
> ½ teaspoon turmeric
> ½ teaspoon cinnamon

1. Sauté onion for a few minutes in a lightly-oiled and heated saucepan.
2. Add the garlic and the ginger and continue to sauté for several minutes.
3. Add the remaining spices and cook for five more minutes.
4. Add water and stir. Add the sweet potato and lentils.
5. Bring to the boil.
6. Lower the heat and simmer for 20–30 minutes until the lentils are cooked.
7. Serve with rice or naan/roti breads for older babies.
Meat dishes

Chicken/beef or lamb casserole

1. Cut one chicken breast fillet, topside beef or lean lamb into cubes.
2. Add one stalk of celery and one carrot, chopped into small pieces.
3. Cover with water and bring to the boil.
4. Cover the pan and simmer until tender.
5. Use a stick blender or a food processor to your baby’s or toddler’s preferred texture.
6. Use other vegetables for a change.

Baby beef stroganoff

- 225g lean sirloin steak, cut into thin strips
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- ½ large onion, chopped
- 55g mushrooms, sliced
- ½ garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tablespoon tomato sauce
- ½ cup natural yoghurt
- 2 tablespoons of Worcestershire sauce (optional)
- Pinch black pepper

1. Melt the margarine in a frying pan and sauté the onions.
2. Add the meat and cook until brown.
3. Stir in the mushrooms, black pepper, garlic, Worcestershire sauce (if using) and tomato sauce, and cover.
4. Cover and cook over low heat for 30 minutes until the meat is tender.
5. Just before serving, stir in the yoghurt. Warm through.
Meat sauce for pasta

1. Fry 200g lean mincemeat in a little oil until brown.
2. Add one tablespoon tomato paste and 200g fresh or canned tomatoes, chopped.
3. Add grated vegetables (carrot, zucchini).
4. Add a little water if necessary, cover and simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Prepare pasta as directed on the packet and serve with the sauce over it.
6. Top with a little grated cheese if you wish.
7. You can add a little onion, garlic and herbs to give more flavour.
Fruity pork

> 170g lean pork, cubed into small pieces
> 170g sweet potato, peeled and cubed
> ¼ apple, peeled and cubed
> 1 medium potato, peeled and cubed
> ½ cup water
> ¼ onion, chopped
> ½ capsicum, cubed

Put the pork and the rest of the ingredients into a saucepan and simmer until well cooked.
Beef, tomato and mushroom braise

> 500g lean beef steak, cut into 1.5cm wide strips  
> 1 tablespoon oil  
> A little extra olive oil  
> 1 onion, cut into wedges  
> 2 cloves garlic, crushed  
> 250g button mushrooms, halved  
> 100g frozen spinach  
> 500g jar tomato pasta sauce  
> 2 tablespoons tomato paste  
> 1 cup salt reduce beef stock  
> Pepper to taste  
> Pinch of sugar

1. Season beef with pepper.
2. Stir fry in a lightly oiled fry pan and transfer to a casserole dish.
3. Add a little oil to the pan and cook garlic and mushrooms for two minutes or until mushrooms are golden.
4. Add tomato pasta sauce, tomato paste, stock, spinach and sugar, stir until the mixture boils.
5. Preheat oven to 180°C.
6. Pour over the beef in the casserole dish and stir to combine.
7. Cover the casserole dish, place in oven and cook for 30 minutes or until beef is tender.
Fish dishes

Poached
Place fish fillet in milk in a pan with a well fitting lid. Cook gently for 10 minutes. Mash or blend.

Microwave
Place fish fillet on plate and cover with plastic wrap (or use microwave dish with lid). Cook on high for about one minute (more or less depending on size – but fish cooks very quickly). Mash or blend as above.

Baked
Place fish in ovenproof dish or wrap in foil. Sprinkle with a little lemon juice. Bake in moderate oven about 10 minutes.

Tuna or salmon mornay

1. Melt one tablespoon butter or margarine in a saucepan.
2. Take off heat and stir in one tablespoon plain flour.
3. Return to heat and cook for one minute.
4. Add 200mls milk and stir constantly while it heats and thickens.
5. Add a small tin of salmon or tuna (mashed), or any cooked fish.
6. Add cooked vegetables (peas and corn are nice), grated cheese and cooked pasta.
7. Stir over low heat until warmed through.
**Tuna casserole**

- 340g dry egg noodles
- 170g tin tuna, drained
- 1 stick celery, finely chopped
- 1 spring onion, chopped
- ½ zucchini, sliced
- 100g cheddar, grated
- Pinch of dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1 tablespoon plain flour
- ½ cup milk

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Grease an oven-proof dish.
3. Cook the noodles according to packet directions and drain
4. Melt margarine in a saucepan, add flour and cook to form a paste.
5. Gradually add milk, stirring continuously until sauce thickens.
6. In a large bowl, mix together the noodles, tuna, celery and spring onion.
7. Stir in the white sauce, add the thyme.
8. Spoon half of the mixture into an oven-proof dish and top with half of the zucchini.
9. Continue layering with noodle mixture and the rest of the zucchini.
10. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 30 minutes.

**Tuna and broccoli pasta**

- 1 tin tuna (small)
- 1–2 tbsp small pasta shapes (stars, macaroni, spaghetti broken)
- ½ cup cheese sauce
- 2–3 broccoli florets

1. Cook pasta in boiling water till soft.
2. In the same water before pasta has finished, add broccoli and cook until tender.
3. Drain and add tuna mash with fork. Stir in cheese.
Sue’s tuna and salad roll ups

- 2x 185g tin tuna drained
- 2 cups lettuce finely shredded
- 2 cups grated carrots
- 1¼ cup grated cheese
- 1 packet soft wraps (or Lebanese bread)
- Small amount mayonnaise

1. Spread mayonnaise thinly onto the wrap or bread.
2. Combine all other ingredients together.
3. Spread evenly on one side of the bread.
4. Neatly roll up to form wraps.
5. Cut to bite size pieces.
Salmon patties

> 500g sweet potato (or potatoes) diced
> 415g tin salmon drained and flaked
> 1 cup dry breadcrumbs
> 1 ½ tablespoon salt reduced vegetable stock powder

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Steam sweet potato, drain well and mash.
3. Mix together sweet potato, salmon, vegetable stock, and breadcrumbs.
   The mixture should be firm enough to handle (add extra breadcrumbs if needed).
4. Shape into fish shapes or use cookie cutter.
5. Sprinkle with some extra breadcrumbs.
6. Cook for 15 minutes or until golden brown.
Cheesy fish
Cheesy fish

- ½ tablespoon margarine
- 2 teaspoon plain flour
- ½ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons cheddar, finely grated
- 95g tin tuna, drained
- ¼ cup small, broccoli florets

1. Melt margarine in small saucepan, add flour and cook, stirring until mixture bubbles and thickens.
2. Gradually add milk; cook, stirring until sauce boils and thickens slightly.
3. Remove from heat; stir in cheese.
4. Boil, steam or microwave broccoli until just tender.
5. Combine fish, broccoli and cheese sauce in a small bowl.
Egg dishes

Boiled eggs
1. Lower egg gently into boiling water to cover.
2. Boil three to four minutes for a soft boiled egg.

Scrambled eggs
1. Mix one egg with two tablespoons of milk.
2. Put into lightly greased pan on stove.
3. Stir until the egg is just set.
4. Do not overcook.
5. Scrambled eggs cook well in a microwave.
6. Mash egg well and mix a little with vegetables.

Frittata

> 4 eggs
> ½ cup milk
> 150g cottage cheese
> 1 zucchini grated
> ½ small sweet potato grated
> ½ cup bacon chopped
> 2 tbsp flour
> Grated cheese

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Mix and turn into a baking dish.
4. Add grated cheese.
5. Serve as fingers or chunks.
Desserts

A special note about milk; if a recipe uses ‘milk’ as an ingredient you may use full cream cow’s milk, soy milk with added calcium, infant formula or expressed breast milk (EBM) to make your dessert.

Custard

1. Use a custard powder and egg.
2. Follow the instructions on the pack, but do not add sugar.
3. Use cow’s milk, your baby’s usual infant formula or expressed breast milk (EBM) for the milk.
4. You can make it in a saucepan on the stove or in a microwave oven.

Desserts ideas

> Stewed or tinned fruit with cooked rice.
> Pieces of ripe banana with cottage cheese.
> Fruit with custard or yoghurt.

Apple crumble

> 1 cup stewed apples (or other fruit)  > 1 tablespoon brown sugar
> ½ cup rolled oats (or plain flour)  > 1½ tablespoons of margarine
>  > ½ teaspoon cinnamon

1. Put stewed apples or other fruit in an ovenproof dish.
2. Mix rolled oats (or plain flour) brown sugar and cinnamon with melted margarine.
3. Sprinkle this mixture over the fruit and bake in a moderate oven for 20 to 30 minutes or until topping is golden brown.
Couscous with fruit puree

- ¾ cup milk (or infant formula/EBM)
- 1 tablespoon instant couscous
- ½ cup pureed fruit
- Pinch ground cinnamon

1. Make up the instant couscous according to instructions on the packet.
2. Combine all ingredients.
3. Swirl through with pureed fruit.

Banana custard

- ½ cup cows milk/infant formula/EBM
- 1 small banana (mashed)
- Lemon juice a few drops
- Vanilla essence a few drops
- 2 teaspoons custard powder

1. Mix milk, custard powder lemon juice and vanilla together in a microwave proof bowl.
2. Cook on high in the microwave for two minutes stirring occasionally.
3. Cool, add mashed banana and serve.

Raspberry rice pudding

- 2½ teaspoons Aborio rice
- 1½ tablespoons caster sugar
- 2½ cups cows milk/infant formula/EBM
- Nutmeg (optional)
- Jam of choice

1. Place rice, sugar and milk in a shallow oven dish.
2. Grate nutmeg over the top.
3. Bake 150°C for 1–2 hours.
Peach crumble

> 2 whole peaches (or small can)  > ¼ cup flour
> 1 teaspoon marmalade  > 2 tablespoons brown sugar
or apricot jam  > 50g of margarine
> 1–2 tablespoons orange juice
> ½ cup oats

1. Peel peaches and slice into a bowl.
2. Mix juice and jam into the peaches.
3. In a bowl, work the margarine into the oats, flour and sugar until it looks like breadcrumbs.
4. Pour over the peaches and bake at 160°C until golden.
5. Serve with custard.

For a variation try pears or apples.
Where to go for help

- Child and Youth Health web site: www.cyh.com
- Your local child health centre and child and family health nurse
  Phone: 1300 733 606 – South Australia only
- Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)
- Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD)
- New mothers groups
- Parent Helpline 1300 364 100 – South Australia only
- Your local doctor
The following list of services may be helpful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)</td>
<td>Mum2Mum helpline, provides one on one counselling over the phone for breastfeeding issues.</td>
<td>Ph 1800 686 2686 <a href="http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au">www.breastfeeding.asn.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and Youth Health website</td>
<td>For information on child health and parenting.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cyh.com">www.cyh.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) website</td>
<td>Practical, up-to-date information on nutrition.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.daa.asn.au">www.daa.asn.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Direct helpline</td>
<td>24 hour call centre for non urgent health advice.</td>
<td>Ph 1800 022 222 <a href="http://www.healthdirect.org.au">www.healthdirect.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Health Communication Service</td>
<td>For information about infant health in many languages.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au">www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Poisons Information Centre</td>
<td>Trained staff can provide information about what to do if a child swallows something that might be dangerous.</td>
<td>Ph 131 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australian Parent Helpline (SA only in partnership with Health Direct.)</td>
<td>24 hours, 7 day support and information on child health, behaviour, nutrition, parenting.</td>
<td>Ph 1300 364 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australian Dental Service</td>
<td>Provides a range of dental care services in SA.</td>
<td>Ph 08 8222 8222 <a href="http://www.sadental.sa.gov.au">www.sadental.sa.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australian Multiple Births Association</td>
<td>Provides information about all aspects of multiple births and living with multiples.</td>
<td>Ph 08 8364 0433 <a href="http://www.multiplebirthsa.org.au">www.multiplebirthsa.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further reading

Women’s and Children’s Health Network books


Department of Health and Aging


Global initiatives and breastfeeding

> Australian Breastfeeding Association – Baby Friendly Health Initiative Australia www.breastfeeding.asn.au
> WHO – World Health Organisation www.who.int/nutrition/topics/infantfeeding/en/

Allergies

> The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) www.allergy.org.au

Nutrition advice

> Nutrition Australia www.nutritionaustralia.org/
> Dietitians Association of Australia www.daa.asn.au/
> The Women’s and Children’s Hospital, Adelaide www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/az/other/nutrition/nut_resources.html
For more recipe ideas go to SA Health. www.sahealth.sa.gov.au


For more information

Child and Family Health Service
295 South Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8303 1522
www.cyh.com

If you do not speak English, request an interpreter from SA Health and the department will make every effort to provide you with an interpreter in your language.

www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons

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When should I start solid foods?

Starting solid food is an important part of your baby's learning and development. New colours, smells, tastes and textures are introduced through foods.

At around six months of age your baby will be ready to try solid foods. Up until six months breastmilk or infant formula is usually all babies need. At around six months solid foods are needed to provide extra energy and nutrients. Even after your baby has started on solid food, breastmilk or infant formula is still the most important source of nutrition for babies under 12 months.

How do I know my baby is ready to start solid foods?

Some signs that your baby is ready to start solid foods:

> Can hold their head up and sit with support.
> Able to control their tongue.
> Interested in what others eat; looking, reaching and grabbing for food.
> Seem to want more food, even after a full breastfeed or bottle.

You should start to see these signs around six months of age. Remember that every baby is different and there is no need to rush to start before six months. Starting solid foods too early is not good for your baby. Before four months of age your baby’s swallowing skills are not ready to eat safely. Also, the digestive system may not be ready to deal with solid foods. It is also important not to leave it too late to start solid foods.

If you are unsure about whether your baby is ready for solid food talk to your child and family health nurse, doctor or dietitian.
How do I feed my baby?

Start by finding a quiet place where you and your baby can concentrate on what you are about to do. A meal time routine can be started right from the very first solid meal.

Introduce new foods one at a time, starting with small amounts of food after a feed of breastmilk or formula. Wait several days before introducing another food.

Begin with a smooth consistency, over time you can thicken it, and try soft lumps.

Use a ‘baby spoon’ or small teaspoon and offer only half a spoonful at a time. Place the food towards the back of the tongue to make it easier for your baby to move the food back for swallowing.

Babies often push food out of their mouth when they begin solid foods. This does not mean they don’t like the food – they have not yet learnt how to move their tongue to swallow the food.
First tastes

From around six months babies can start eating smooth foods.

In the beginning offer a breastfeed (or infant formula) first, and then try a small amount of solid food. Start by offering solid food once a day at a time that suits you. Increase to twice a day as your baby gets used to solid foods. It may take many tastes before a new food is accepted – it can be as many as eight to 10 times before a baby accepts a new food happily. There is no evidence to say that giving solids in the afternoon will help your baby sleep through the night. Some good foods to introduce first are:

> **Baby rice cereal**
  Plain baby rice cereal is an ideal first food to try. It is a good source of iron and is easily digested by your baby. Cereal can be made up to the thickness your baby can manage by mixing it with expressed breastmilk, water or formula.

> **Fruit**
  Well mashed soft fruits such as banana, avocado or stewed fruits (eg apple, apricot, pear), can be started once your baby is taking rice cereal well.

> **Vegetables**
  Start with cooked and well mashed potato, pumpkin or sweet potato. Then introduce other vegetables like peas, cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini and carrots. All should be well cooked and mashed to a smooth texture.

> **Meat, chicken and fish**
  Well blended cooked lean meat, poultry and fish are good choices for your baby. Blend them with a stick blender or food processor so they are easy for your baby to swallow. These are high in iron so are important to include in your baby’s diet. Remember babies don’t need added salt or spices in their foods.

> **Custards and yoghurts**
  ‘Baby’ yoghurts and custards are a good choice as they are often lower in added sugar. You can also use a full fat, low sugar regular yoghurt. Small amounts of cow’s milk containing foods can be included in your baby’s diet, however, cow’s milk should not be used as the main drink for your baby until around 12 months of age.

After starting with soft, smooth foods it is **very important** to move onto the next stage; learning to chew soft foods.
Learning to chew

From seven months babies can start eating soft foods with lumps.

Most babies can manage thicker textures and soft lumps soon after starting solid foods. Once your baby can sit alone and make chewing movements they can start to bite and chew, even if they don’t have teeth. When giving foods with lumps, your baby may spit it out or even gag the first few times.

**Gagging is a normal part of learning to eat and it usually frightens the parents more than the baby!**

This does not mean they are not ready, they just need to keep practising. Continue to offer lumpier textures and pieces of soft food. The chewing action helps to develop your baby’s muscles for eating and talking.

Your baby can start trying to drink from a cup at six months of age. Use tap water, expressed breastmilk or formula. Some good foods and textures to progress to at this stage are:

> **Other grains**  
  Baby cereals or breakfast type cereals can also be included for variety, such as Weet-bix™ or porridge. Soften with expressed breastmilk, formula or a small amount of cow’s milk.

> **Fruit and vegetables**  
  Fruit and vegetables can progress from mashed to soft lumps to help your baby learn to chew. Try ripe or lightly cooked fruit, mashed, diced or grated – eg ripe banana, avocado, mashed stewed fruit, grated apple. Choose mashed or diced cooked vegetables – eg zucchini, pumpkin or sweet potato.

> **Egg**  
  Whole egg can be given. Egg is a good source of protein. Make sure it is well cooked, such as scrambled or hard-boiled and mashed.

> **Dairy**  
  Try yoghurts with soft lumps or grated cheese in cooking.
> **Meat**
Try minced meat, finely chopped chicken, flaked fish or canned tuna.

> **Vegetarian**
If you and your baby are vegetarian it is important to include other sources of protein and iron such as mashed, well cooked legumes, lentils, beans, wholemeal breads, cereals, and eggs. For more ideas talk to your child and family health nurse, dietitian or doctor.

**Self-feeding**
From eight months babies can start eating finger foods and firmer lumps. Babies are learning to feed themselves. Encourage their effort. This is a messy but important step.

At around nine months of age your baby may be having solid food three times a day, along with breast or infant formula feeds. Offer pieces of food to hold and help self-feeding. Remember to always watch your baby while they eat and avoid foods that may cause choking. For advice on how to prevent choking see page 20.

**Family meals**
From 12 months onwards your baby can move on to healthy foods that the rest of your family eat. See recipes on page 29.
Finger food ideas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bread and other cereals</th>
<th>Fruit and vegetables</th>
<th>Meats and protein foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strips of bread or toast (spreads such as cream cheese will make them softer and a little easier to manage)</td>
<td>Avocado</td>
<td>Strips of well cooked, lean beef, lamb and chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiny sandwiches with avocado, Vegemite™ or ricotta cheese</td>
<td>Large sticks of rockmelon/watermelon with seeds removed</td>
<td>Pieces of soft cooked meats eg from casseroles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooked pasta shapes eg spiral shapes provide easy grip for little hands</td>
<td>Banana rings or chunks</td>
<td>Canned fish eg tuna, salmon (mix with mashed potato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pikelets</td>
<td>Orange, mandarin segments with peel removed</td>
<td>Cubes of tofu (bean curd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rusks</td>
<td>Canned fruit eg diced mixed fruit, peach slices</td>
<td>Meat or fish patties. Cooked meat or fish can be finely chopped and mixed with mashed potato then shaped into balls or patties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savoury biscuits with spreads eg rice crackers</td>
<td>Grated or soft stewed apple, pear</td>
<td>Boiled or scrambled egg</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Grapes cut into quarters with skins and seeds removed</td>
<td>Sticks/grated cheese</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stone fruit eg plums, Nectarines, remove tough skin and stone</td>
<td>Baked beans or other cooked beans</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Food for toddlers

For good nutrition, toddlers need to eat a range of foods. Foods should be similar to the rest of the family, without adding extra sugars, fats or salt.

The following table shows food groups and serve sizes for your toddler. Remember small child serves have been used to allow for small tummies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food group</th>
<th>Serves per day</th>
<th>Example of one child serve</th>
<th>Provides</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles | At least four child serves per day | > 1 slice of bread or ½ bread roll  
> 2 large plain cracker biscuits  
> 1 breakfast biscuit eg Weetbix™  
> ½ cup breakfast cereal or ¼ cup muesli  
> ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or noodles  
> 1 small pancake | carbohydrates, protein, fibre, folate, B vitamins, iron | Choose wholemeal/wholegrain products where possible  
When comparing breakfast cereals, choose those with less added sugar (compare using the total sugar/100g on the nutrition panel for each cereal) |
| Vegetables, legumes         | At least two child serves per day | > 1 cup salad  
> 1 small potato or ½ cup mashed potato  
> ½ cup cooked vegetables  
> ½ cup cooked dried beans, peas, lentils, baked beans | vitamins, minerals, fibre and carbohydrates | Offer a variety of vegetables of different colours each day.  
They contain different minerals, vitamins and protective factors for good health and development |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food group</th>
<th>Serves per day</th>
<th>Example of one child serve</th>
<th>Provides</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>At least one child serve per day</td>
<td>&gt; 1 banana or apple or orange</td>
<td>vitamins, carbohydrates and fibre</td>
<td>Fresh fruit is a better choice than fruit juice (hard, raw fruit such as apple should not be given to children under four years of age as they are at risk of choking)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 1 slice melon or 2 small fruits eg apricots, plums</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 1 cup canned/stewed fruit</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Dried fruit eg 4 dried apricot halves</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 1 ½ tablespoons sultanas</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; ½ cup fruit juice (served with meals) and limit to 1 serve daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milk, yoghurt, cheese</td>
<td>At least three child serves per day</td>
<td>&gt; ½ cup (125ml) of full cream/reduced fat milk or a breastfeed</td>
<td>calcium, protein, riboflavin and vitamin B12 fat</td>
<td>Children less than two years of age need full cream milk and milk products. This is to ensure they get the extra fat for their growth and development during this period.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; ½ cup calcium fortified soy milk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; ½ cup custard</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 1 small tub of yoghurt (100g)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 20g cheese / 1 slice of processed cheese / 1/3 cup grated cheese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts*, legumes</td>
<td>At least two child serves per day</td>
<td>&gt; 1–2 slices cooked lean meat, fish or chicken</td>
<td>protein, iron, zinc, niacin and vitamin B12</td>
<td>Choose lean meats, trim excess fat and cook in minimal amounts of fat (eg oil, margarine, butter). Remove fish bones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; ¼ cup cooked stew, casserole or mince</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Do not give whole nuts or other similar foods to children under four years of age as they are at risk of choking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 1–2 slices ham or beef</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 2 fish fingers or 1 sausage (occasionally only)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 1 egg</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 2 tablespoons smooth peanut butter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; ¼ cup cooked dried beans, peas, lentils, baked beans</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Snack ideas

> Fresh or tinned fruit (in natural juice)
> Soft vegetable sticks – lightly steam potato, carrot, celery, beans to soften
> Rice crackers and cheese
> Wholemeal pikelets
> Fruit bun, raisin bread or pikelets spread lightly with margarine
> Fruit muffin
> Scone with margarine and jam
> English muffin with margarine and cheese or peanut butter
> Corn or rice cakes with peanut butter, mashed banana, eg Vegemite™ spread or cheese
> Mini pizzas using English muffins as the base
> Small tub yoghurt
> Bread fingers (toast cut into fingers) or crackers and lightly spread with peanut butter, mashed avocado, yeast spread or ricotta cheese
> Cheese stick or triangle and sultanas
> Small can baked beans or spaghetti
> Slice of toasted wholegrain bread topped with ricotta cheese and fruit spread
> Fruit kebabs – cubes of fruit onto bamboo skewers (remember to remove any sharp points on the skewer).

Do not give popcorn, nuts, hard lollies, corn chips, hard fruits, hard vegetables or other similar food to children under four years of age as they are at risk of choking.
Tips for managing mealtimes

What parents can do
There are lots of things parents can do to help toddlers try new foods and make learning to eat a fun time. Talk to them about what you want them to do rather than insisting they eat.

Offer food in a relaxed, happy environment
Make the focus enjoying food and company. Children tend to like foods they link with fun. Try to eat together as a family. Set up some family food rituals for example pancakes for Sunday breakfast.

Set a good example
Children learn by watching you. Let them see you enjoy healthy foods and they’ll be encouraged to try them too. Keep foods in the house that you want children to eat and reduce those that you don’t. If children can’t see ‘junk foods’, they’re less likely to ask for them. Be aware that children are influenced by the food ads they see on television. Your toddler may not have the same eating pattern as you. Follow their lead and be patient.

Be prepared for mess
Toddlers are still developing their eating skills. The more they practice the better they will get. Encourage their effort. If you get frustrated with them they will become stressed and it will be harder for them to develop eating skills.

Remove distractions
Toddlers are easily distracted at meal times. Turn off the television, put pets outside and tidy away toys so children can focus on the meal.

Avoid rewards, bribes and punishments around food
For example, ‘If you eat all your vegetables you can have ice-cream for dessert’. This only makes dessert more desirable than vegetables, which isn’t a message we want to give. Never force your toddler to eat.
Avoid negative messages about food

Don’t talk about foods as being ‘good’ or ‘bad’. There is a place for all foods in a healthy diet. ‘Everyday’ foods from the five food groups (breads and cereals, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, meat and meat alternatives) should make up the bulk of the diet.

‘Sometimes’ foods (eg biscuits, cordial, soft drinks) should be eaten less often as part of an overall healthy diet.

Offer new foods often

Toddlers are often wary of trying new foods. Follow their cues on what and how much to eat. It can take up to 10 times of being offered a food before they will accept it. Give small amounts to try at first but don’t pressure your toddler. Be persistent in offering them foods but not pushy.

Be patient and keep calm

If your toddler refuses food, remain calm and try not to react. Make eye contact. If they see you getting worked up about their eating, they quickly learn it’s an easy ‘button’ to push with you. Don’t fuss, just remove the food and finish the meal time. Your toddler does not realise how much effort you have put into preparing their meal. Try not to take this personally. If your toddler is going through a fussy stage, keep meals simple. Having realistic expectations on how little food toddlers need to eat will help reduce your stress levels.

Toddlers like choice too

Toddlers should be allowed to select their own food sometimes. Offer a choice of no more than two foods. Remember, if they have made a choice and refuse to eat it, don’t make them another meal. Wait until the next meal or snack time. They may enjoy eating their meal together with the rest of the family.
Caring for teeth

Tooth decay may occur in toddlers that frequently suck on or fall asleep with bottles of fluids containing sugars such as milk, cordial or juice. Encourage your toddler to drink from a cup. Wean your toddler from the bottle if they are still using one by 12 months.

Fluoride helps to protect the teeth from decay and tap water has fluoride in it. Too many sweets, lollies and sticky dried fruit (sultanas, fruit straps) can also contribute to tooth decay, so offer these foods only sometimes and in small amounts.

As soon as teeth appear, clean them with a soft cloth or a small soft brush. Your toddler will soon want to brush their own teeth, but will need your help until they are about eight years old. From birth to 18 months you don’t need to use toothpaste, only from 18 months on you can use a little low fluoride or children’s toothpaste (just a smear to start with). Encourage your toddler to spit this out rather than swallow it and there is no need to rinse. From six years you can use an adult toothpaste.

For more information on caring for your toddler’s teeth contact the South Australian Dental Service if you live in South Australia or your local public dental health service. Refer to the ‘Where to go for help’ section on page 62.
Prevent choking

Choking is a risk for babies and young children under four years of age because they:

> put small objects into their mouths
> do not have the back teeth needed to chew and grind lumps of food fully
> are still learning to eat, chew and swallow
> may run, play, laugh or cry while there is something in their mouth.

How can I make eating safer for my child?

At eating times:

> Always stay with your baby or toddler and supervise them while eating.
> Make sure that they sit quietly while eating. If your baby or toddler is playing, laughing, or crying wait until they settle before offering food.
> Never force them to eat as this may cause them to choke.

Food:

Some foods should not be offered to babies or toddlers because they can be unsafe. Don’t give the following foods to babies and toddlers:

> Food that can break off into hard pieces. For example, avoid raw carrot and celery sticks, apple pieces and whole grapes. These foods should be cut up, grated, cooked or mashed.
> Sausages, frankfurts and other meats should be cut into small pieces. Tough skins on frankfurts and other sausages should be removed. Check fish for bones and remove any.
> Popcorn, nuts, hard lollies, corn chips or other similar foods.

Consider doing a first aid course. This can give you the skills to help in a situation where your child is choking or where other first aid care is needed.
Food allergies

Food allergies have become more common in recent years. Allergies tend to run in families.

Symptoms of food allergy include:

> **Local reactions** – for example a red rash around the mouth where the food has touched the skin.

> **General reactions** – skin rashes on other parts of the body, hives, swellings, vomiting, wheezing or other breathing problems, or in rare cases, collapse.

**Note:** If there are severe symptoms including breathing difficulties or collapse, call 000 for an ambulance.

If you think your baby or toddler has a food allergy stop giving the food you think is causing the reaction. See your doctor to help you identify the cause and work out a plan of action. A referral to a specialist might be required.

If there is a strong history of allergies in the family, talk to your doctor or paediatrician (child doctor) to discuss what might reduce the risk of your child having food allergies.

If there is a family history of allergies:

> do not delay starting solid foods after six months
> do not avoid foods that often cause allergies.

This area is being researched and recommendations are changing as we learn more about it. If you have any concerns contact your doctor.
**Healthy weight**

Overweight and obesity is not just a problem in adults. More children, including toddlers are becoming overweight. This is a concern because it can cause lots of problems with health and self esteem, both now and later in life. Parents often don’t realise their child is overweight. It’s important to have your child’s growth checked. The earlier overweight is identified, the more likely this can be reversed.

Toddlers should be active every day. Keep play simple and fun. Try to get everyone involved. Avoid games with lots of rules, winners and losers.

Like healthy eating, toddlers learn about play and exercise from watching you. You can let them lead the play and encourage their efforts. Show them that you enjoy playing with them.

If you have concerns about your child’s weight, seek advice from your doctor, dietitian or child and family health nurse.

Always supervise your toddler while they are playing and take part yourself.

**Some simple ideas for being active:**

- Take your toddler to the local playground, gardens, or park.
- Take your toddler for a walk or bike ride.
- Keep a balloon in the air by continually tapping it up.
- Teach your toddler to swim.
- Stand in a circle, kick a soft ball to one another and gradually get further apart.
- Create an obstacle course, inside or out and hurry through it.
- Contact your local council or community group for details of playgroups or kindergyms near you.
- Limit the time spent watching television or the computer screen.
What if my baby rejects food?

Eating solid foods is a new experience and it can take a few attempts before your baby becomes familiar with the taste and texture of solid foods. Don’t be upset if your baby spits the food out. This doesn’t mean they don’t like it.

Babies need to learn how to move their tongue in the way needed to swallow solids. At the beginning their tongue may push the food out – this is not a sign that they do not like the food.

What does baby-led weaning mean?

‘Baby-led weaning’ is a different way of introducing solid foods.

Baby-led weaning skips the smooth and lumpy stages of introducing solids (where a parent would feed the baby with a spoon) and instead lets babies self feed with finger foods from around six months. Babies begin by picking up and licking the food, before moving on to chewing and swallowing.

In the beginning very little food is actually swallowed. We don’t know if babies fed this way always get what they need, as solids are needed in a baby’s diet from around six months to provide important nutrients for growth and development, such as iron, zinc, protein and energy.

Babies also learn different skills at different stages of eating. Offering a range of different foods and textures allows your baby to learn important skills like:

- eating from a spoon
- using the different muscles in their mouth
- finger feeding
- swallowing lumpy foods without gagging
- using a spoon, fork or cup on their own.

All babies need to learn how to feed themselves. It is important not to ‘get stuck’ on only feeding your baby smooth foods. Encourage your baby’s attempts to self feed by offering them a spoon to hold to lick or suck food from. Offer lumpy and finger foods for baby to explore when they are ready (see page 9 for ideas). Remember to offer safe foods to prevent choking and always supervise your baby when eating (see page 20 for more information).
When and how do I introduce eggs?
There is no need to be worried about the introduction of egg into your child's diet if they do not have any known food allergies. Small amounts of well cooked egg may be introduced around the time you introduce meat. There is no need to separate the yolk from the white.

If your child has existing food allergies speak to your doctor about introducing egg and other foods into their diet.

My baby is constipated – what can I do?
First it is important to check if your baby really is constipated. Constipation is when your baby's poo is hard pebbles, dry and difficult to pass. Talk to your doctor or child and family health nurse if you are not sure.

Constipation may occur when starting solid foods, especially if there is less breastmilk or formula being taken. When starting solid foods, it is a good time to introduce tap water in a cup. Offer fruit, vegetables, legumes and wholemeal breads and cereals. Do not use added bran. If you continue to have concerns, discuss this with your doctor, child and family health nurse or dietitian.

Are spicy foods harmful?
If your family likes to cook with herbs and spices, it's possible to gradually introduce them to your baby. Once tolerating a range of food most babies can tolerate mild herbs and spices. Food made with hot spices, such as chillies may cause discomfort.

My twelve month-old baby won’t swallow meat – he chews and chews and then spits it out – what can I do?
Many babies find chewing meat difficult. Others keep chewing until the meat becomes too dry to swallow. Try to serve moist meat dishes such as casseroles, stews, mince dishes or thinly sliced, slowly cooked, roast meat. Also try alternatives such as baked beans, tofu, nut loaf and lentil burgers.

Tiredness may also lead to slow chewing so try serving meat at lunch. Reheating the family meal from the night before is fine. Do not worry if your child does not swallow the meat. He or she is still learning to chew and getting used to the taste of meat which is an important step.
I have heard some types of fish are high in mercury – what fish can my child have?

Fish is an important part of a healthy diet. Fish contains protein, omega 3 fats, iodine and other vitamins and minerals. These are good for heart health and children’s proper growth and development. Nearly all fish and seafood contains mercury. Yet some types of fish contain higher amounts of mercury. Too much mercury may harm a young child’s developing nervous system. Follow these guidelines so your child gets all the goodness from fish, but reduces the exposure to mercury:

> Limit the intake of shark (flake) or billfish (broadbill, swordfish and marlin) to no more than one child serve per fortnight, with no other fish eaten during that fortnight.
> Limit the intake of orange roughy (also sold as sea perch) and catfish to no more than one child serve per week, with no other fish eaten during that week.
> Allow one to three child serves per week of any fish that is not listed above (eg tuna, salmon, pollock, shrimp, hake or hoki).

A child serve is around 75gm or three fish fingers.

For more information about mercury in fish see the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) website: www.foodstandards.gov.au.

What do I do if my toddler refuses their dinner?

If your toddler refuses the family meal at dinner time, you don’t need to make another meal. If your toddler will not eat the food that is offered, then you can let them know when the next meal time will be. Some toddlers will have a snack before bedtime, others may be happy to wait until breakfast tomorrow. This will do no harm.

My two year old daughter will only eat jam or vegemite sandwiches – what can I do?

It is common for toddlers to have food fads and at this time they may only eat one thing for lunch every day for a week or more. Be patient and continue to offer a variety of foods in small amounts.
My toddler will not drink water?

The best drink for your family is tap water.

You can help your toddler by:

> setting a good example by drinking water yourself
> trying a special cup or water bottle
> always having water available at meal times and for snacks
> not keeping sweet drinks in the house and do not drink them yourself. If your toddler is already used to sweet drinks, start to reduce this now and offer them watered down. Your toddler may be upset at first but will get used to it if you continue
> being patient. This may take time, particularly if your toddler is in the habit of wanting juice or cordial whenever they are thirsty or hungry.

I am worried about my toddler’s eating

Many parents worry about their toddlers’ eating at some stage, particularly in younger children when food intake and appetite appear to change daily. In most cases everything is usually fine.

See your doctor or child and family health nurse if:

> you have concerns about your toddler’s growth
> your toddler is unwell, tired and not eating
> meal times are causing lots of stress and anxiety
> you are worried about ongoing food refusal and their weight.
When my toddler goes to child care they eat really well but not at home – what can I do?

You could explore with the child care what your toddler is eating, what meals and snacks they provide and try these at home too. If having a ‘main meal’ at lunch they may not need anything large when they come home, perhaps a snack or sandwich or some yoghurt and fruit. If they have had a busy day at child care they possibly will be quite tired and not interested in food.

Toddlers tend to enjoy eating with other children and may therefore eat a lot more when at child care than at home. If your toddler is eating on their own at home it may help to sit down together as a family when eating to encourage shared eating like they do at child care.

When my toddler goes to grandma’s house they eat badly, what can I do?

Check with grandma what is being offered. It depends on how often they go to grandmas’. If not very often it is probably not something to be overly concerned about. Toddlers and children soon learn that they experience different things with different people/places.

Discuss what your concerns are and how you feel, as grandma may not realise you are worried or upset by what they are giving your toddler. Negotiate diet and meals to be given with grandma.
Recipes


The recipes are planned for the whole family. They can be modified in textures by blending or mashing. You may leave out or reduce spices for the younger baby.

As a guide to the texture, follow:

> **First tastes:** smooth foods – from six months on.
> **Learning to chew:** soft lumps as the next stage from seven months on.
> **Self feeding:** as finger foods from about eight months onwards when they can hold the food easily in their hands.
> **Family meals:** from 12 months on you can follow the recipe to suit your family. You may just need to cut up the meal in small bite size pieces for your toddler.
Fruit and vegetables

Boiled/steamed or microwaved fruit or vegetables
Wash, peel and core the apple or pear (or other fruit). Cut into slices or dice. Put in saucepan with a little water (or steam in a steamer). Cook gently for five to 10 minutes till soft. Add more water if it is getting dry. Drain in colander.

Frozen vegetables are just as good as fresh vegetables. Cook as directed on the packet. Microwave ovens are useful as fruit and vegetables cook well and quickly with little or no water needed. The smaller the quantity the less time it takes to cook. Do not overcook, experiment to find the right time. Make sure the food has cooled enough before giving to your baby.

Grated fruit and vegetables can be served raw:
> on their own
> mixed with grated cheese
> mixed with cottage cheese
> try grated carrot and apple with yoghurt

Popular fresh fruit mashes:
> apple and pear – stewed or tinned
> pear and peach – stewed or tinned
> peaches and apricots – stewed or tinned
> banana and melon
> avocado and banana
> avocado and apple – stewed or grated

Popular vegetable mash combinations:
> zucchini and potato – one medium potato and one medium zucchini
> parsnip, sweet potato and spinach – one medium parsnip, one small sweet potato and 20g baby spinach leaves (trim stems with scissors prior to cooking)
> carrot and pumpkin – two carrots and a wedge of butternut pumpkin
> cauliflower and potato – 250g cauliflower florets and one potato
> pumpkin, sweet potatoes and broccoli
> pumpkin, carrot and apple
> cauliflower, pumpkin and carrot
> avocado and pumpkin
Baked potatoes

1. Wash well.
2. Cook in a moderate oven for one to one and a half hours.
3. Test with skewer to see if they are done.
4. Cut open; take out insides and mash. Good with other vegetables or cheese.

Vegetable soup

1. Put one cup of chopped vegetables in a saucepan.
2. Add two cups of water and one tablespoon of rice or pasta.
3. Bring to the boil and simmer until vegetables are well cooked.
4. Puree or mash – do not drain.

Vegetable patties

1. Mix grated vegetables (potato, carrot, pumpkin, zucchini) with cereal (breadcrumbs, rolled oats, wholemeal flour) and an egg.
2. Mould into patties and fry in a little olive oil.
3. To vary this, add a small cooked fish fillet, or some tinned salmon or tuna to the mixture.
4. Or add cooked minced meat.

Potato pancakes

> 1 grated potato > 1 egg
> 1 grated zucchini, carrot, pumpkin or sweet potato > ¼ cup of flour
> > 1 teaspoon milk

1. Combine all ingredients and cook in pan with a small amount of olive oil.
2. Cook both sides for 10 minutes.
**Pumpkin soup**

- 1 butternut pumpkin cubed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable stock powder
- 1–2 teaspoons nutmeg
- 375ml tin light evaporated milk

1. Boil the pumpkin until cooked.
2. Add the stock powder and nutmeg.
3. Remove half of the water and set aside.
4. Blend pumpkin in a food processor then add evaporated milk.
5. If required, add some of the water set aside to achieve desired thickness.
6. Stir well to mix over a low heat.

**Sweet potato and apple**

- 1 small sweet potato
- 1 apple peeled and sliced
- 1 tablespoon apple juice

1. Steam apple and sweet potato until tender.
2. Mash with juice.
3. Add ricotta cheese to change the texture.
Bread

Rusks

1. Use slices of bread about one cm thick.
   Use white or wholemeal bread, but not multigrain.
2. Cut into strips.
3. Place on oven tray.
4. Bread can be lightly spread with margarine or olive oil before baking.
5. Bake in a very slow oven about one and a half to two hours or until dry and a light brown colour.

Sandwiches

Tiny sandwiches with avocado, Vegemite™ or ricotta cheese are good for finger foods.
Pasta and rice

**Risotto**

- ¼ onion peeled and chopped (optional)
- ½ cup Arborio rice
- 1 ½ cups diluted unsalted chicken stock
- 1 cup pumpkin
- 2 tbsp grated cheese

1. Fry onion in a small amount of olive oil.
2. Add rice and cook for two minutes.
3. Stir in chicken stock and pumpkin.
4. Reduce heat and cook.
5. Add extra water if needed until rice is tender.
6. Remove from heat and stir in cheese.

**Pumpkin risotto**

- 1 teaspoon of olive oil
- ½ cup Arborio rice (or long grain rice)
- 1 ½ cups diluted salt reduced chicken stock (or just hot water if preferred)
- ¼ onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 cup grated pumpkin (can also use zucchini, mashed peas or finely chopped broccoli)
- 2 tablespoon grated parmesan cheese

1. Lightly fry the onion in butter.
2. Add rice and cook for two minutes, stirring continuously.
3. Stir through chicken stock and pumpkin.
4. Reduce the heat and cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Once all the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender (adding more water if necessary), remove from heat and stir through the parmesan before serving.
Chicken and vegetable risoni

- 100g chicken mince
- 1 small red capsicum, finely chopped
- 1 large zucchini, finely chopped
- 310g tin creamed corn kernels
- 400g tin crushed peeled tomatoes, undrained
- 2 tablespoons risoni

1. In a lightly oiled pan, cook chicken for five minutes or until brown.
2. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
3. Cook capsicum in the same pan over medium heat, stirring for three minutes.
4. Add corn and zucchini; cook, stirring, for two minutes.
5. Add tomatoes; cook stirring until vegetables soften.
6. Combine with cooked chicken.
7. Cook risoni in boiling water until tender and drain.
8. Toss risoni with one third cup of chicken and vegetable mixture.
9. Blend or process until smooth for younger babies.
# Vegetable lasagne

- 4–6 instant lasagne sheets
- 1 stick celery
- 1 onion minced
- 1 cup mushroom, sliced
- 250g packet frozen spinach, thawed
- ½ cup zucchini, diced
- 1 capsicum, diced
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables

- 400g tin diced tomatoes
- 400g tin tomato soup
- ½ tablespoon dried parsley flakes
- 2 garlic cloves crushed
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- ½ cup grated cheese
- 1 teaspoon mixed herbs

1. In a pot, combine tinned tomatoes, tomato soup, tomato paste, mushrooms, celery, zucchini, spinach, capsicum, herbs, parsley and garlic.
2. Simmer until well cooked.
3. Add the mixed frozen vegetables and allow to cook for another two minutes.
4. In an oven-proof dish, layer sauce between lasagne sheets.
5. Cover with foil and bake at 180°C for 35–40 minutes.
6. Sprinkle with cheese and serve.
Macaroni cheese

- ½ cup of small, cooked pasta shapes
- 3 tablespoons white sauce
- 2 tablespoons grated cheese

1. Place pasta in a bowl.
2. Add sauce and cheese and stir through.
3. If required, reheat in the microwave on 50% power.
4. Stir to disperse any hot spots and check food temperature before serving.

White sauce

- 1 ¼ cups milk
- 2 tablespoons cornflour

1. Bring 1 cup of milk to the boil, reduce heat to low.
2. Blend together cornflour and remaining milk.
3. Add blended cornflour to hot milk, mixing thoroughly.
4. Return to low heat and cook until sauce thickens, stirring constantly.
5. Use as required or freeze in ice cube trays.

For a variation add grated zucchini or carrot or diced frozen mixed vegetables.
Cheesy veggie pasta bake

- 250g penne pasta
- 2 cups mixed frozen vegetables (eg broccoli, cauliflower and carrot mix)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- ½ bunch spinach, chopped
- 420g tin corn kernels
- ½ teaspoon mustard

- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ cup plain flour
- 1 cup milk
- 420g tin tomato soup
- 400g tin diced tomatoes
- 1 cup grated cheese

1. Cook pasta according to packet directions.
3. Heat oil in pan and cook onion and spinach until tender.
4. Add mustard, paprika and flour, cook stirring over low heat.
5. Gradually add in milk and soup, stir until mixture boils and thickens.
6. Add diced tomatoes, cook and stir until mixture is hot.
7. Stir pasta, steamed frozen vegetables, corn and three quarters of the cheese into the tomato mixture. Put into baking dish.
8. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese and bake at 180°C until cheese is melted.
Spaghetti bake

- 300g uncooked spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons crushed garlic
- 1 onion diced
- 500g lean beef mince
- ¾ cup grated carrot
- ¾ cup celery thinly slice
- ¾ medium capsicum diced
- 2x 400g tinned tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese
- ¾ cup grated tasty cheese
- Pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Cook spaghetti according to packet directions.
3. Drain and set aside.
4. In a large lightly oiled non stick frying pan, sauté onion and garlic for one minute.
5. Add mince, combine and cook until brown.
6. Add carrot, celery, capsicum, tinned tomatoes, pepper and cook for three minutes.
7. Fold in cooked spaghetti combining well with mince sauce.
8. Pour into an oven proof dish.
9. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 35 minutes.
Lentils

Boston bean bake

- 4 eggs
- 1 onion
- 440g tin baked beans
- 125g cheese, grated
- 2 carrots, diced
- ½ packet frozen spinach
- 2 teaspoons mixed herbs
- Breadcrumbs, as needed

1. Sauté the onion in a lightly oiled pan.
2. Add all ingredients to a large bowl (adding enough breadcrumbs to make a thick mixture).
3. Mix together with cleaned, washed hands.
4. Put baking paper onto a tray.
5. Place mixture onto the tray. Press flat (about 3–4cm thick).
6. Bake in oven at 180°C for approximately 40 minutes or until firm.
7. Remove from tray immediately onto wire racks (to prevent the bottom from getting soggy).
8. Cool before slicing.
9. Serve with salad or cooked vegetables.

This makes an ideal lunch box snack.
Dhal for baby

- ½ cup red lentils
- Oil for sauté
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1¼ cups water
- 1 small sweet potato
- ½ teaspoon coriander
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

1. Sauté onion for a few minutes in a lightly-oiled and heated saucepan.
2. Add the garlic and the ginger and continue to sauté for several minutes.
3. Add the remaining spices and cook for five more minutes.
4. Add water and stir. Add the sweet potato and lentils.
5. Bring to the boil.
6. Lower the heat and simmer for 20–30 minutes until the lentils are cooked.
7. Serve with rice or naan/roti breads for older babies.
Meat dishes

Chicken/beef or lamb casserole

1. Cut one chicken breast fillet, topside beef or lean lamb into cubes.
2. Add one stalk of celery and one carrot, chopped into small pieces.
3. Cover with water and bring to the boil.
4. Cover the pan and simmer until tender.
5. Use a stick blender or a food processor to your baby’s or toddler’s preferred texture.
6. Use other vegetables for a change.

Baby beef stroganoff

- 225g lean sirloin steak, cut into thin strips
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- ½ large onion, chopped
- 55g mushrooms, sliced
- ½ garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tablespoon tomato sauce
- ½ cup natural yoghurt
- 2 tablespoons of Worcestershire sauce (optional)
- Pinch black pepper

1. Melt the margarine in a frying pan and sauté the onions.
2. Add the meat and cook until brown.
3. Stir in the mushrooms, black pepper, garlic, Worcestershire sauce (if using) and tomato sauce, and cover.
4. Cover and cook over low heat for 30 minutes until the meat is tender.
5. Just before serving, stir in the yoghurt. Warm through.
Meat sauce for pasta

1. Fry 200g lean mincemeat in a little oil until brown.
2. Add one tablespoon tomato paste and 200g fresh or canned tomatoes, chopped.
3. Add grated vegetables (carrot, zucchini).
4. Add a little water if necessary, cover and simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Prepare pasta as directed on the packet and serve with the sauce over it.
6. Top with a little grated cheese if you wish.
7. You can add a little onion, garlic and herbs to give more flavour.
Fruity pork

> 170g lean pork, cubed into small pieces
> 170g sweet potato, peeled and cubed
> ¼ apple, peeled and cubed
> 1 medium potato, peeled and cubed
> ½ cup water
> ¼ onion, chopped
> ½ capsicum, cubed

Put the pork and the rest of the ingredients into a saucepan and simmer until well cooked.
Beef, tomato and mushroom braise

- 500g lean beef steak, cut into 1.5cm wide strips
- 100g frozen spinach
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 500g jar tomato pasta sauce
- A little extra olive oil
- 2 table spoons tomato paste
- 1 onion, cut into wedges
- 1 cup salt reduce beef stock
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 250g button mushrooms, halved
- 1 cup salt reduce beef stock
- Pepper to taste
- Pinch of sugar

1. Season beef with pepper.
2. Stir fry in a lightly oiled fry pan and transfer to a casserole dish.
3. Add a little oil to the pan and cook garlic and mushrooms for two minutes or until mushrooms are golden.
4. Add tomato pasta sauce, tomato paste, stock, spinach and sugar, stir until the mixture boils.
5. Preheat oven to 180°C.
6. Pour over the beef in the casserole dish and stir to combine.
7. Cover the casserole dish, place in oven and cook for 30 minutes or until beef is tender.
Fish dishes

Poached
Place fish fillet in milk in a pan with a well fitting lid. Cook gently for 10 minutes. Mash or blend.

Microwave
Place fish fillet on plate and cover with plastic wrap (or use microwave dish with lid). Cook on high for about one minute (more or less depending on size – but fish cooks very quickly). Mash or blend as above.

Baked
Place fish in ovenproof dish or wrap in foil. Sprinkle with a little lemon juice. Bake in moderate oven about 10 minutes.

Tuna or salmon mornay
1. Melt one tablespoon butter or margarine in a saucepan.
2. Take off heat and stir in one tablespoon plain flour.
3. Return to heat and cook for one minute.
4. Add 200mls milk and stir constantly while it heats and thickens.
5. Add a small tin of salmon or tuna (mashed), or any cooked fish.
6. Add cooked vegetables (peas and corn are nice), grated cheese and cooked pasta.
7. Stir over low heat until warmed through.
Tuna casserole

- 340g dry egg noodles
- 170g tin tuna, drained
- 1 stick celery, finely chopped
- 1 spring onion, chopped
- ½ zucchini, sliced
- 100g cheddar, grated
- Pinch of dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1 tablespoon plain flour
- ½ cup milk

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Grease an oven-proof dish.
3. Cook the noodles according to packet directions and drain.
4. Melt margarine in a saucepan, add flour and cook to form a paste.
5. Gradually add milk, stirring continuously until sauce thickens.
6. In a large bowl, mix together the noodles, tuna, celery and spring onion.
7. Stir in the white sauce, add the thyme.
8. Spoon half of the mixture into an oven-proof dish and top with half of the zucchini.
9. Continue layering with noodle mixture and the rest of the zucchini.
10. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 30 minutes.

Tuna and broccoli pasta

- 1 tin tuna (small)
- 1–2 tbsp small pasta shapes (stars, macaroni, spaghetti broken)
- ½ cup cheese sauce
- 2–3 broccoli florets

1. Cook pasta in boiling water till soft.
2. In the same water before pasta has finished, add broccoli and cook until tender.
3. Drain and add tuna mash with fork. Stir in cheese.
Sue’s tuna and salad roll ups

- 2x 185g tin tuna drained
- 2 cups lettuce finely shredded
- 2 cups grated carrots
- 1¼ cup grated cheese
- 1 packet soft wraps (or Lebanese bread)
- Small amount mayonnaise

1. Spread mayonnaise thinly onto the wrap or bread.
2. Combine all other ingredients together.
3. Spread evenly on one side of the bread.
4. Neatly roll up to form wraps.
5. Cut to bite size pieces.
Salmon patties

> 500g sweet potato (or potatoes) diced
> 415g tin salmon drained and flaked
> 1 cup dry breadcrumbs
> 1 ½ tablespoon salt reduced vegetable stock powder

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Steam sweet potato, drain well and mash.
3. Mix together sweet potato, salmon, vegetable stock, and breadcrumbs. The mixture should be firm enough to handle (add extra breadcrumbs if needed).
4. Shape into fish shapes or use cookie cutter.
5. Sprinkle with some extra breadcrumbs.
6. Cook for 15 minutes or until golden brown.
Cheesy fish

- ½ tablespoon margarine
- 2 teaspoon plain flour
- ½ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons cheddar, finely grated
- 95g tin tuna, drained
- ¼ cup small, broccoli florets

1. Melt margarine in small saucepan, add flour and cook, stirring until mixture bubbles and thickens.
2. Gradually add milk; cook, stirring until sauce boils and thickens slightly.
3. Remove from heat; stir in cheese.
4. Boil, steam or microwave broccoli until just tender.
5. Combine fish, broccoli and cheese sauce in a small bowl.
Egg dishes

Boiled eggs
1. Lower egg gently into boiling water to cover.
2. Boil three to four minutes for a soft boiled egg.

Scrambled eggs
1. Mix one egg with two tablespoons of milk.
2. Put into lightly greased pan on stove.
3. Stir until the egg is just set.
4. Do not overcook.
5. Scrambled eggs cook well in a microwave.
6. Mash egg well and mix a little with vegetables.

Frittata

> 4 eggs
> ½ cup milk
> 150g cottage cheese
> 1 zucchini grated
> ½ small sweet potato grated
> ½ cup bacon chopped
> 2 tbsp flour
> Grated cheese

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Mix and turn into a baking dish.
4. Add grated cheese.
5. Serve as fingers or chunks.
Desserts

A special note about milk; if a recipe uses ‘milk’ as an ingredient you may use full cream cow’s milk, soy milk with added calcium, infant formula or expressed breast milk (EBM) to make your dessert.

Custard

1. Use a custard powder and egg.
2. Follow the instructions on the pack, but do not add sugar.
3. Use cow’s milk, your baby’s usual infant formula or expressed breast milk (EBM) for the milk.
4. You can make it in a saucepan on the stove or in a microwave oven.

Desserts ideas

> Stewed or tinned fruit with cooked rice.
> Pieces of ripe banana with cottage cheese.
> Fruit with custard or yoghurt.

Apple crumble

> 1 cup stewed apples (or other fruit)   > 1 tablespoon brown sugar
> ½ cup rolled oats (or plain flour)    > 1½ tablespoons of margarine
>                                    > ½ teaspoon cinnamon

1. Put stewed apples or other fruit in an ovenproof dish.
2. Mix rolled oats (or plain flour) brown sugar and cinnamon with melted margarine.
3. Sprinkle this mixture over the fruit and bake in a moderate oven for 20 to 30 minutes or until topping is golden brown.
Couscous with fruit puree

> ¾ cup milk (or infant formula/EBM)
> 1 tablespoon instant couscous
> ½ cup pureed fruit
> Pinch ground cinnamon

1. Make up the instant couscous according to instructions on the packet.
2. Combine all ingredients.
3. Swirl through with pureed fruit.

Banana custard

> ½ cup cows milk/infant formula/EBM
> 1 small banana (mashed)
> Lemon juice a few drops
> Vanilla essence a few drops
> 2 teaspoons custard powder

1. Mix milk, custard powder lemon juice and vanilla together in a microwave proof bowl.
2. Cook on high in the microwave for two minutes stirring occasionally.
3. Cool, add mashed banana and serve.

Raspberry rice pudding

> 2½ teaspoons Aborio rice
> 1½ tablespoons caster sugar
> 2½ cups cows milk/infant formula/EBM
> Nutmeg (optional)
> Jam of choice

1. Place rice, sugar and milk in a shallow oven dish.
2. Grate nutmeg over the top.
3. Bake 150°C for 1–2 hours.
Peach crumble

- 2 whole peaches (or small can)
- 1 teaspoon marmalade or apricot jam
- 1–2 tablespoons orange juice
- ½ cup oats
- ¼ cup flour
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 50g of margarine

1. Peel peaches and slice into a bowl.
2. Mix juice and jam into the peaches.
3. In a bowl, work the margarine into the oats, flour and sugar until it looks like breadcrumbs.
4. Pour over the peaches and bake at 160°C until golden.
5. Serve with custard.

For a variation try pears or apples.
Further reading

Women’s and Children’s Health Network books


Department of Health and Aging

> Get Up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood – Family Book
  www.health.gov.au

Global initiatives and breastfeeding

> UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Fund
  www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/
> Australian Breastfeeding Association – Baby Friendly Health Initiative Australia
  www.breastfeeding.asn.au
> WHO – World Health Organisation
  www.who.int/nutrition/topics/infantfeeding/en/

Allergies

> The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)
  www.allergy.org.au

Nutrition advice

> Nutrition Australia
  www.nutritionaustralia.org/
> Dietitians Association of Australia
  www.daa.asn.au/
> The Women’s and Children’s Hospital, Adelaide