Introducing complementary foods (solid foods and liquids other than Breast Milk or infant formula) is an important milestone in your baby’s life. We now know that the very first menu has a lifelong effect. Recommendations for infant feeding during the first year of life have varied over time and across cultures. This helpful leaflet will help and guide you with the latest scientific recommendations on a healthy complementary diet. According to recommendations, ideally, infants should begin weaning at six months, while breastfeeding should continue for two years.
What is weaning?

Weaning is the process of gradually letting your baby become accustomed to a full adult diet. The introduction of weaning foods (*also called complementary foods*) is **in addition** to Breast Milk or infant formula, and **does not** serve as a replacement for either. By the end of their first year your baby should be accustomed to eating a variety of foods.

Tips and recommendations

- It is very important to make sure that complementary foods are hygienically prepared and stored.
- Complementary foods should be introduced one at a time to identify allergies and intolerances.
- Start with cereals, porridge with Breast Milk, pureed vegetables or fruit and then move on to a mixed diet in mashed form.
- Introducing vegetables before fruits may increase vegetable acceptance.
- Offer a wide variety of dark green, leafy and deep yellow vegetables and colourful fruits.
- Pure fruit juices (*diluted and limited to 115-170 ml/day*) may be introduced into the diet after six months of age.
- Your baby still needs about 600 ml of Breast Milk or infant formula per day. Cow’s milk is a poor source of iron and should not be the predominant drink before 1 year.
- Small volumes of cow’s milk and yogurt may be added to complementary foods.
- You do **not** need to avoid fish, eggs, and cow’s milk used in foods and cooking or cheese, yoghurt, wheat and other gluten-containing cereals until a specific age. Recent research proved that avoidance of these foods
will not protect your baby against allergies - only Breast Milk can protect against allergies.

- Do not exclude foods unnecessarily. Ask your doctor to test for allergies to avoid restriction of food groups. It is unwise to restrict food choices among young children without professional help and advice.

- It is important that your baby develops a taste for healthy foods.

- New foods sometimes need to be offered several times (up to 8-10 times) before your baby will eat it. Do not give up and ensure that you offer a wide variety of fruit and vegetables.

- Avoid force feeding and overfeeding.

- Meals should be low in refined sugar, fat and saturated fat.

- Only add a pinch of salt when you cook food if really necessary. Avoid processed meats (e.g. polony and bully beef) and sweet food. If you introduce salty and sweet foods, your baby will develop a taste for these foods.

- Tinned fish or omega 3 enriched milk or eggs are excellent sources of omega 3 fatty acids that are important for brain development. Include these 2-3 times per week.

- Eggs (egg yolk and egg whites) are an affordable healthy protein food that contains important nutrients for brain development.

- Babies do not need vitamin and mineral supplementation provided they are healthy, eating a variety of foods, are being breastfed, fed infant formula and or eat enriched breakfast cereal.

- Commercial infant feeding products are not better than home prepared meals. These should merely be used as alternatives and for convenience purposes (such as when travelling).
How much food does a baby need?

6 - 8 months: Start with two to four meals per day.
9 - 11 months: Increase to three to four meal times per day.
12 - 24 months: three to four meal times per day with additional nutritious snacks (such as a piece of fruit or bread) offered 1-2 times per day, as desired. Snacks are defined as foods eaten between meals usually self-fed, convenient and easy to prepare.

By 8 months most infants can also eat “fingerfoods” (snacks that can be eaten by children alone). By 12 months, most children can eat the same types of foods as consumed by the rest of the family. Avoid foods in a form that may cause choking (such as whole nuts, whole grapes or raw carrots, whole or in pieces).

Refer to table on the next page for examples of menus for main meals to provide about one third to a half of daily complementary food needs for babies. This is to be served with two other daily meals of which one should be an iron and vitamin enriched cereal (South African maize meal is also fortified). The tables clearly shows the differences in the consistency of the meals.
### Babies 6-8 months

#### Sweet potato and fish
- Sweet potato, boiled without skin, pureed: 60 g
- Fish, fresh, cooked and pureed: 15 g
- Sunflower oil: 2.5 g

#### Carrots and beef
- Pureed cooked carrot: 60 g
- Pureed braised beef: 15 g
- Sunflower oil: 2.5 g

#### Spinach and cheese
- Mashed potato: 50 g
- Spinach cooked and pureed: 30 g
- Cheese (mozzarella or cheddar) finely grated: 15 g

#### Chicken and broccoli
- Chicken, white meat cooked and pureed: 15 g
- Broccoli cooked and pureed: 30 g
- Potato or sweet potato, cooked and mashed: 30 g
- Sunflower oil: 2.5 g

#### Pumpkin and beans
- Pumpkin, boiled and pureed: 60 g
- Beans, white kidney or chickpeas, dried, cooked and pureed: 15 g
- Sunflower oil: 2.5 g

#### Suggested Snacks
- Pureed fruit
- Yoghurt, smooth, fruit *(preferably whole milk or low fat)*
- Suitable commercial baby foods
- Infant cereal

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For more information on healthy living kindly contact Nutrition Information Centre Stellenbosch University (Nicus) on 021 933 1408 or send an email to nicus@sun.ac.za
## Babies 9-11 months

### Fish and pasta casserole with sweet potato
- Sweet potato, boiled without skin: 60 g
- Fish casserole with vegetables: 45 g
- Macaroni cooked: 45 g
- Sunflower oil: 2.5 g

### Beef cottage pie with carrots
- Cottage pie: 60 g
- (Traditional recipe with mince and mashed potato)
- Boiled mashed carrots: 60 g
- Sunflower oil: 2.5 g

### Broccoli cheese bake
- Mashed potato: 60 g
- Finely chopped boiled spinach: 60 g
- White sauce: 20 g
- Cheese (mozzarella or cheddar) grated: 15 g

### Creamed broccoli and chicken
- Chicken, white meat cooked soft and moist, cut finely: 30 g
- Broccoli, boiled and mashed with a fork: 45 g
- Potato or sweet potato without skin, cooked and mashed with a fork: 45 g
- Full cream smooth cottage cheese: 10 g
- Sunflower oil: 2.5 g

### Bean casserole
- Pumpkin, boiled: 60 g
- Dried beans or chickpeas cooked and mashed with a fork: 30 g
- Tomato and onion, Stewed: 15 g
- Rice cooked: 45 g

### Suggested Snacks
- Fruit, peeled, stewed, mashed or chopped
- Yoghurt, fruit (preferably whole milk or low fat)
- Infant cereal
- Age appropriate commercial baby foods
- Pieces of cooked vegetables, such as green beans, cauliflower and carrot

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Should you have any comments on our range of consumer leaflets, please write to Sarita van Wyk at:
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