

GOOD HEALTH FOR 0-1 YEAR OLDS

What is good health?

Breastmilk or first infant formula should be given until baby is at least 1 year old. As baby eats more solid foods, the amount of milk they want will decrease. Cows' milk can be used in cooking or mixed with food from around 6 months but shouldn't be given as a drink to babies until they are 12 months old. This is because cows' milk does not contain enough iron to meet babies' needs. Using an open cup or a free-flow cup without a valve will help your baby learn to sip and is better for your baby's teeth. Once your baby is 1 year old, feeding from a bottle should be discouraged.

Supervision

Infants and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating. Infants and young children should never be left alone while they are eating, and staff should be familiar with paediatric first aid advice for children who are choking.

Safe weaning

Progression from the introduction of first foods (at about 6 months), to a range of blended or mashed foods, and then to a wider range of chopped or minced foods should be a gradual process, based on each infants' developmental readiness, rather than a staged process based on age alone.

Foods to avoid before around 6 months of age

Ideally, babies should be introduced to solid foods from around 6 months of age. If parents or carers have decided to introduce solid foods to their child before 6 months of age, you will need to work closely with them to ensure a consistent and safe approach. It is important to remember that there are some foods which should not be given before 6 months of age:

- cow's milk
- eggs
- foods containing wheat or gluten, including wheat, barley and rye (for example bread, pasta)
- nuts, peanuts and peanut products
- seeds

- fish and shellfish
- honey – avoid honey until 12 months old
- if a baby is less than 6 months old, sterilise water by boiling it first and then letting it cool right down - once a baby is 6 months old, this is no longer necessary

Foods to avoid up to 5 years

- Nuts, especially peanuts, can cause severe allergic reactions in some children and all settings should have an allergy plan in place. Whole nuts, peanuts and seeds should not be given to children under 5 years old as they pose a choking risk.
- Raw eggs, or food containing partially cooked eggs, for example uncooked cake mixture and runny boiled eggs (unless they have the red lion stamp or you see the words "British Lion quality").
- Foods high in salt such as: sausages, bacon, crackers, crisps, ready meals and takeaways.
- Sugar – both in sugary snacks and by not adding sugar to food.
- Foods high in saturated fat such as biscuits, crisps and cakes.
- Fresh pate (meat, fish or vegetable-based) to reduce the risk of food poisoning.
- Unpasteurised milk, milk drinks and cheese, mould-ripened cheeses and soft blue-veined cheese, to reduce the risk of food poisoning. However, these cheeses can be used as part of a cooked recipe as listeria is killed by cooking.
- Shark, swordfish and marlin as the levels of mercury in these fish can affect a child's developing nervous system.
- Raw shellfish to reduce the risk of food poisoning, and make sure any shellfish you use is thoroughly cooked.
- Raw jelly cubes – these are a choking hazard.

Foods to serve occasionally from 6 months to 4 years

- Although it is recommended to provide oily fish in early years settings at least once every 3 weeks, do not provide it more than twice a week, as it can contain low levels of pollutants.

Physical Activity

- Infants should be physically active several times every day in a variety of ways, including interactive floor-based activity, e.g. crawling.
- For infants not yet mobile, this includes at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day while awake (and other movements such as reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling themselves independently, or rolling over); more is better.

NB: Tummy time may be unfamiliar to babies at first, but can be increased gradually, starting from a minute or two at a time, as the baby becomes used to it. Babies should not sleep on their tummies.

Oral Health

Good oral health habits need to be formed from the earliest age. As soon as babies erupt their first tooth, introduce a tooth brush and begin understanding of good habits through playful activities.

The EYFS Statutory Framework states:

3.48 – 3.50

'Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious'

'...providers must obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies...'

Early years choking hazards food safety advice

For babies and young children, food can be a choking hazard, especially when they do not chew their food well or they try to swallow it whole.

Choking can happen with any foods, but 'firm foods', bones and small round foods that can easily get stuck in the throat present a higher risk. Therefore, care givers should follow these five essential steps:

1. Make sure food is suitably prepared and served for babies and children under 5 years old. For suitable foods, see <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/feeding/>. Introduce babies to solid foods from around 6 months of age.
2. Think about size, shape and texture of food. Cut food into narrow batons, avoid round shapes and firm foods. Firm fruit & vegetables can be softened by cooking.
3. Ensure that babies and young children are alert and seated safely upright in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair whilst eating.
4. Babies and young children should be supervised at all times while eating. You will be able to identify the early signs of choking and prevent harm.
5. Encourage babies and young children to chew food well. Teach children how to chew and swallow food properly, and ensure they take their time during meals. This will reduce their risk of choking.

Care givers and parents should be familiar with how to respond to a choking incident in line with guidance on first aid for children:

How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>

How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>

For more information

Healthier Families - Home - NHS

www.nhs.uk

Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf

foundationyears.org.uk

Example menus for early years settings in England: part 1

publishing.service.gov.uk

Drinks and cups for babies and young children - NHS

www.nhs.uk

Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK

education.gov.uk

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