

Feeding is a special bonding time for you and your baby. When you're feeding, talk to your baby, hold them close and look into their eyes. This helps your baby feel secure and loved.



## Who can I contact with my breast or chest feeding questions?

- **CALL:** Your hospital, doctor, midwife, or WIC staff

### WASHINGTON WIC BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT:

- **VISIT:** [doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/BreastfeedingSupport](https://doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/BreastfeedingSupport)

### LA LECHE LEAGUE 24-HOUR NATIONAL HELPLINE:

- **CALL:** 1-877-452-5324

### OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH:

- **CALL:** 1-800-994-9662 (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST) to talk to a trained breastfeeding peer counselor in English or Spanish
- **VISIT:** [bit.ly/OSHA\\_WOWH](https://bit.ly/OSHA_WOWH) and [bit.ly/WA\\_ATG\\_PBFA](https://bit.ly/WA_ATG_PBFA)

### WASHINGTON POISON CENTER:

- **CALL:** 1-800-222-1222 for free and confidential advice about medicines and breastfeeding

For help finding nutrition resources or to find out if you are eligible for WIC or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) call:

WithinReach

Help Me Grow Washington Hotline  
**1-800-322-2588** (711 TTY relay)  
or [www.ParentHelp123.org](https://www.ParentHelp123.org)



Watch Me Grow Washington is a program of the Washington State Department of Health.

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To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers needing assistance, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).

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# Feeding Your Baby

✱ BIRTH TO 6 MONTHS





*Trust your baby to let you know when they're hungry and when they've had enough to eat.*

### **What do I feed my baby for the first 6 months?** ○ ○ ○

Human milk is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months.

It's the healthiest food for your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breast or chest feeding your baby for at least 1 year. Human milk changes as your baby grows, providing antibodies and excellent amount of nutrition. For babies who don't get human milk, use infant formula fortified with iron. For babies who are only or partly fed human milk, it is recommended to start a vitamin D supplement soon after birth. Talk to your doctor to see if your baby needs other supplements.

**Watch your baby's cues to learn how much they need to eat.**

### **How do I know when my baby is hungry or full?** \* \* \*

Your baby will help you figure out how much they need to eat. As you get to know your baby, you'll recognize these cues and be able to respond to their needs.

Your baby is hungry when they:

- Keep hands near their mouth or suck on their hands.
- Bend arms and legs.
- Lick their lips and stick their tongue in and out.
- Put their hands in a fist.
- Make rapid eye movement beneath closed eyelids.
- Pucker or smack lips.
- Lean head toward your chest, arm, or bottle (also called rooting).
- Seem fussy or unhappy.
- Cry (this is a late sign of hunger).

Your baby is full when they:

- Stop sucking and close their lips.
- Turn their head away from your chest or bottle.
- Push away.
- Fall asleep.
- Relax their body and open their hands.

### **Breast or chest feeding offers healthy benefits for you and your baby!** △ △ △

Human milk has the right ingredients in the right amounts to give your baby the healthiest start in life. Breast or chest feeding is good for you, too. Parents who feed this way say:

**"Breastfeeding helps me feel closer to my baby."**

**"I save time because I don't have to mix formula or clean bottles."**

**"Nighttime feedings are easier."**

Human milk protects your baby's health. Human milk is full of antibodies that help babies fight off viruses and bacteria. Breast or chest fed babies are at lower risk of:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Illnesses, such as colds and ear infections.
- Allergies.
- Diabetes or other health conditions as they grow.

Breast or chest feeding is good for you, too. It helps you:

- Recover from pregnancy quicker.
- Lower your risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer.
- Reduce your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes.
- Reduce your risk of developing postpartum depression.

**National Maternal Health Hotline call: 1-833-852-6262**





## How much do I feed my baby? ○ ○ ○

Your baby's tummy is small, so they need to eat often. During growth spurts, your baby will give you cues that they want to eat more. Your baby may want to eat more often or longer. If breastfeeding, the more you feed, the more milk your body makes. Babies who are fed formula may drink 1 or 2 more ounces than usual during a feeding or may want to eat more often.

### Feeding Recommendations:

#### Birth to 6 months:

Feed your baby whenever they give you signs of hunger. Your baby will want to eat about 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. Your baby's tummy is small. Watch for feeding cues to let you know when your baby is full. See the inside of this brochure for examples.

If you have questions or concerns about your baby's feeding needs, talk to your doctor or nurse or if you're on the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program, ask to speak to a WIC counselor.



### Tips to successfully breast or chest feed after you go back to work or school \* \* \*

If your baby goes to child care, ask their child care provider how they support you feeding or pumping on site. Share information with them about how to handle your pumped milk.

- Find out if your workplace has an infant at work program that allows you to bring your baby with you to work.
- You may need a pump. Some health insurance programs, or employers provide pumps and other feeding support. If you're on the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program, ask to speak to a WIC counselor to learn more about working and feeding and how WIC can support you.
- Ask where you can pump at work or school. By law, you must be offered a private place with electricity that is not a bathroom to pump human milk for your baby.
- Become familiar with how your child care provider can support you and your baby with feeding, and consider sharing information on how to store and feed your milk.

### Laws protect a person's right to pump their milk at work and school.

It's your right to pump milk for your baby. If you pump milk at work or school, remember to refrigerate or chill it as soon as you can. Freshly pumped milk can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 4 days, or in a covered container at room temperature (up to 77°F or 25°C) for up to 4 hours. You can also put milk in the freezer for 6 months. We recommend using BPA free plastic or glass containers.

### How can I feed my baby when we are out and about? △ △ △

Washington State law protects your right to feed in public—anywhere, anytime and however you want. If you're at a store or business and want privacy, ask if there's an area to feed your baby.

If your baby drinks formula, remember to:

- Wash your hands before making bottles.
- Bring a bottle with warm water and a separate container with pre-measured formula for easy mixing.
- Hold your baby when you feed them and make eye contact.
- Use slow-paced feeding by holding the bottle horizontally and allowing the milk to slowly flow into the nipple. Allow your baby to swallow, breathe, and take breaks according to their feeding cues. Do not tip the bottle so that the milk is continually flowing into your baby's mouth. This may cause your baby to be overfed and force them to keep drinking in order to breathe.
- Hold the bottle for your baby. Don't prop the bottle in your baby's mouth or let your baby bottle-feed on their own. Your baby may choke or get ear infections.

Learn more about your rights and find information at [bit.ly/OSHA\\_WOWH](http://bit.ly/OSHA_WOWH) and [bit.ly/WA\\_ATG\\_PBFA](http://bit.ly/WA_ATG_PBFA).

### When is my baby ready for solid foods? ● ● ●

Talk to your doctor about when your baby might be ready for solid foods.

Babies start to eat solid foods when they are developmentally ready at about 6 months old. Starting solid foods too early can cause:

- Choking because your baby has not developed feeding skills.
- Constipation because of less liquids is used.
- Other health problems.

Watch for the following signs and cues that your baby is developmentally ready to eat solid foods:

- Sit with support.
- Hold their head up and steady.
- Open their mouth for food.
- Swallow food from a spoon.

As you start feeding your baby solid food, remember most of their nutrition should still come from human milk or formula.

### How do I start introducing solid foods? \* \* \*

Give your baby all the human milk or formula they want before giving them solid foods. 2 or 3 times a day, try mixing 1 teaspoon of baby cereal with 2 tablespoons of human milk or infant formula. Make the mixture thin at first so your baby can learn to eat it easily. As your baby learns to eat from a spoon, you can make it a little thicker.

#### Introduce 1 new food at a time.

Wait 5 days before offering another new food. This helps you see if your baby has an allergic reaction to a certain food. An allergic reaction can be a rash, vomiting, or diarrhea. If your baby has an allergic reaction call their doctor or nurse.

#### Store human milk safely.

Learn about safe techniques to pump and store human milk at [cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](http://cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm).

