



Starting Table & Finger Foods

By 9 to 12 months, your baby will be ready to join your family at the table for meals.

During this time, many babies will:

- **Eat with their fingers.**
 - **Want to eat the same food the family eats.**
 - **Use a regular cup with help at meals and snacks.**
 - **Enjoy learning about food.**
 - **Be messy eaters.**
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- Wash your baby's hands before eating now that he is crawling and touching many things.
 - Your baby needs foods with more texture to help him learn how to chew. Babies with only a few teeth can chew soft foods.
 - Cut the food you give your baby into small pieces, especially round foods like grapes and hot dogs, to prevent choking.
 - If your baby refuses a food, offer it another time. It may take a while for him to get used to new tastes and textures.
 - As you offer the cup more, your baby will start drinking less from the bottle. This will help to have your baby off the bottle around age 1.
 - For your baby's safety, don't give him bottles or sippy cups to carry around.

Family meal time is important. This is a good time to start sitting down to eat meals with your baby; he will learn everything about eating from you.

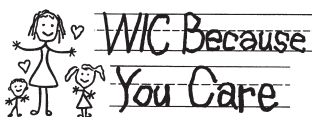
Most babies are now ready for three meals a day plus snacks and breast milk or formula. Gradually decrease the number of feedings from the breast or bottle as your baby eats more solid foods.

Start with a tablespoon or two of each food. Let your baby's hunger be your guide. A good meal pattern for your baby is:

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| Breakfast | cereal, fruit |
| Morning snack | crackers or cheese |
| Lunch | meat, vegetable, fruit and bread |
| Afternoon snack | crackers, yogurt, fruit or cereal |
| Dinner | meat, vegetable and noodles |
| Bedtime snack | toast, cereal or yogurt |
| Breast milk or formula | three to four feedings, plus offer in a cup at meals and snacks |

Offer finger foods for meals and snacks, such as:

- Toast.
- Noodles.
- Cooked or canned vegetables.
- Crackers (graham, soda, animal).
- Pork and beans.
- Cereal, like Cheerios®.
- Cheese (shredded or cubed).
- Canned fruit or soft, fresh fruit.



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