



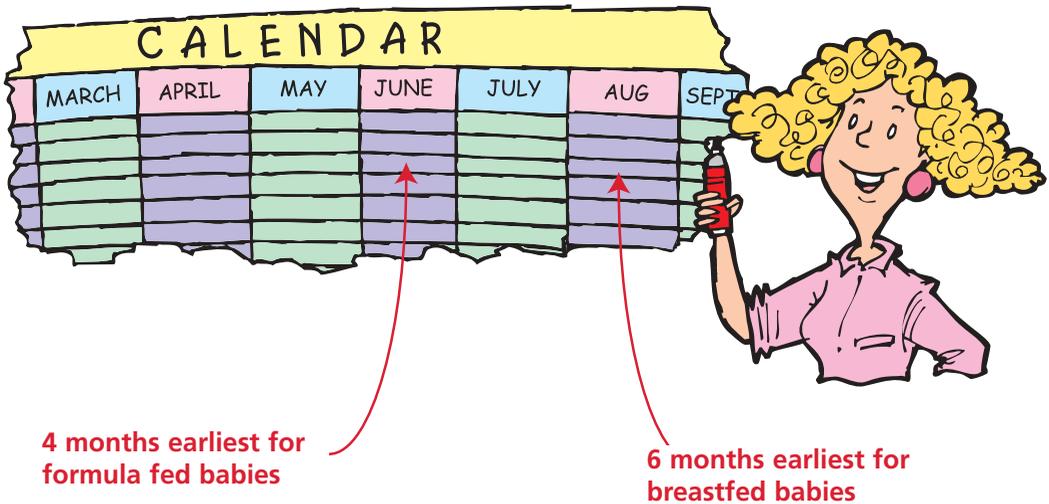
**starting to  
spoonfeed  
your baby**

# When to start solids?

Breast milk provides all the nourishment your baby needs up until 6 months. It is recommended that breastfeeding should continue together with a healthy, balanced diet for up to two years or longer, if mother wishes. Formula milk is the next best substitute for breast milk.

Spoonfeeds should be introduced to your baby's diet at 6 months if you have exclusively breastfed your baby, or at 4-6 months if you have fed your baby formula. Exclusive breastfeeding means that your baby has been given only breast milk with no other foods or fluids for the first 6 months. Early introduction of spoonfeeds (before 17-18 weeks) is not recommended (this includes giving your baby any foods such as baby rice or rusks).

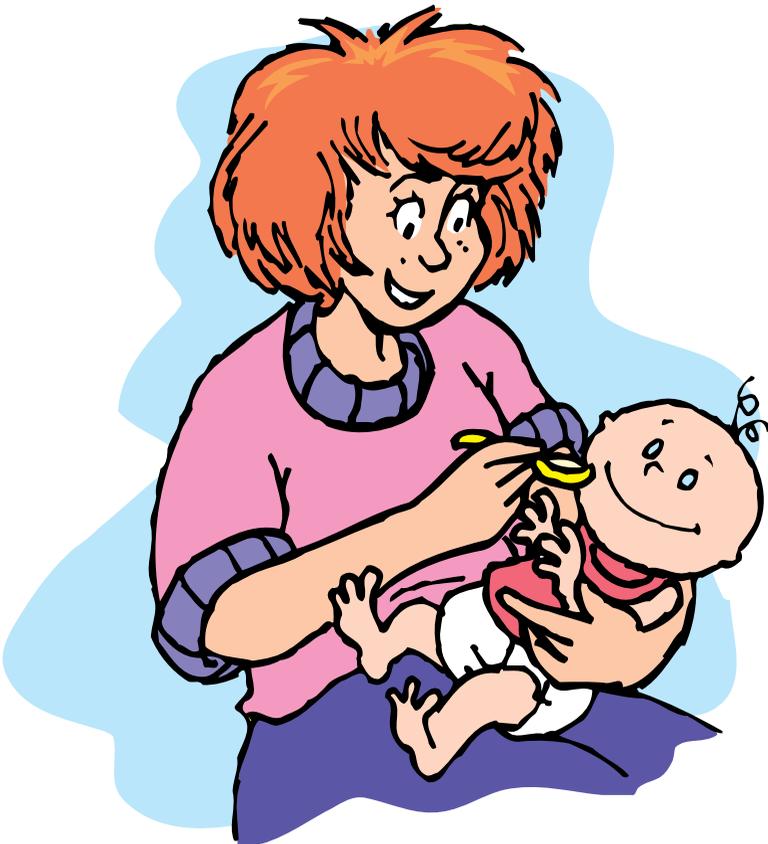
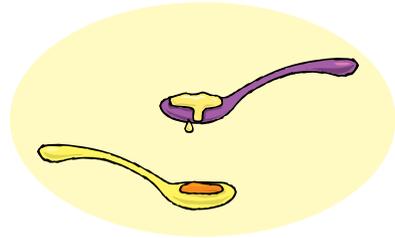
Remember your baby can decide for himself/herself how much food they need - so try not to feed until the plate is empty.



# Baby's first foods

First foods should be of a puréed and soft runny consistency, without lumps.

- Introduce one new food at a time.
- Suitable first foods: baby rice, fruit and vegetable purées.
- Allow your baby to get used to this food before starting another.
- Start with one teaspoon per day, increasing gradually to 2-3 teaspoons per day.

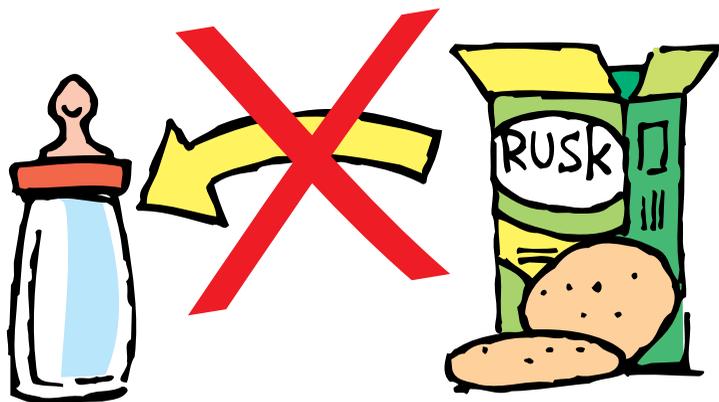


# How to start?

- Ensure you have plenty of time.
- Choose a time when your baby is not too hungry.
- The best way for a baby to learn to take foods is from a spoon. Introduce the spoon to your baby's mouth gradually so that he or she can suck the food from it.
- Give food first and then follow with breast milk or formula milk.



**Never put rusks, cereals or other foods into the bottle. This makes the feed too concentrated and may be harmful to baby.**



# Drinks for your baby

As your baby takes more spoonfeeds, they will need less breast/formula milk. If your baby is full on milk feeds, they may not take spoonfeeds.

- **Breastfed babies should be offered only breast milk up to 6 months.**
- **For formula fed babies, formula milk or cooled boiled water** should be the only drinks given up to 4 months.
- **Fruit juices** should not be given in place of milk, from a bottle or at bedtime. Small amounts of well-diluted, unsweetened fruit juice (dilute 1 measure of pure juice to 4 or 5 measures of cooled boiled water) should only be given from a cup, at mealtimes, or with snacks from 6 months onwards.
- **Tea, fruit drinks** and **fizzy** drinks are unsuitable drinks for children.



Your baby needs to learn how to drink from a beaker/cup, rather than drinking from a bottle. It is advised to use beakers with two handles and no lid. Start encouraging your baby to drink from a beaker from 6 months, to encourage your baby to learn how to swallow. **By one year, your baby should only be drinking from a beaker. Bottles should not be taken to bed.**



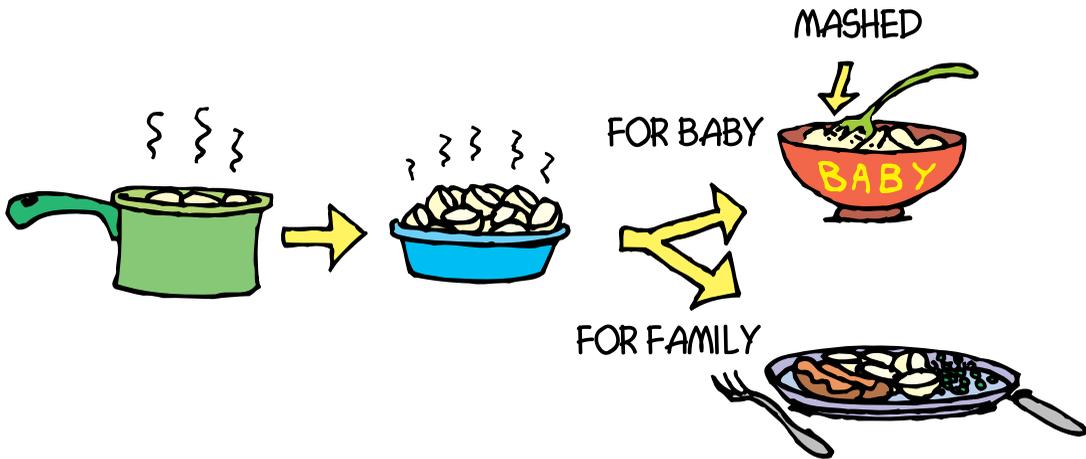
## Remember

Cows milk is not suitable as a main drink for children under 1 year. Small quantities to moisten your baby's solids may be gradually introduced from 6 months.



# Preparing food for your baby

By preparing homemade foods you can have control over what exactly your baby is eating. It is good for your baby to become used to eating home-prepared foods from an early age. Home-prepared meals are often cheaper than jars of baby food.



When preparing meals for the rest of the family, remove your baby's portion before adding seasoning (salt, pepper). Make up a supply of baby foods at the one time and freeze them. Small portions can be frozen in ice cube trays. Do not add salt to baby's food.

## To soften your baby's food you can use

- Breast Milk/Formula Milk
- Vegetable water
- Cooled boiled water
- Cows Milk after 6 months

### **Avoid**

- Stock Cubes, gravy and packet & jars of sauce, as these all contain a lot of salt

# Commercial Foods?

- These can be expensive;
- Useful when travelling or eating away from home;
- Choose savoury meals rather than sweetened desserts and puddings which are high in sugar;
- Try not to rely on commercial foods every day.



Babies have to learn to swallow food. Your baby may seem to be spitting the food out. This does not mean they do not like it, they are just getting used to spoonfeeding. Offer your baby food that is smooth, soft and lump-free. Remember, if your baby is still taking full milk feeds, they may reject spoonfeeds as they are full.

# Stage 1 - Introduction of Spoonfeeds

## Suitable Foods

Puréed meat, peas and beans  
Puréed fruit and vegetables  
Puréed potato  
Gluten-free cereals e.g. baby rice  
(Purée-foods with breast milk, formula milk, boiled water or water from cooking vegetables)

## Consistency

Puréed and of a soft consistency without lumps. Start with a thin purée and make thicker as baby learns to take food from a spoon.

## Suitable Drinks

Breast milk  
Formula milk  
Cool boiled water (if necessary)

## Foods to be avoided

Gluten-containing foods e.g. bread, pasta, wheat, rye, oats, barley and breakfast cereals.  
Cow's milk  
Yogurts, fromage frais, cheese  
Whole nuts and peanut-containing products  
Eggs

**Note:** Babies appetites can vary. Start with 1-2 teaspoons of food at meals and increase gradually. Remember to include puréed meat or chicken in your baby's diet.

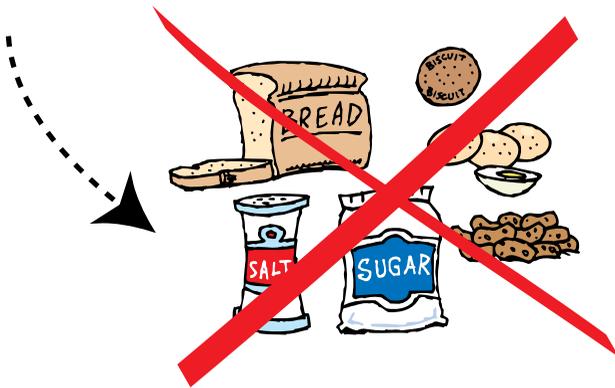
## Suitable First Foods:



# Foods to be avoided until 6 months

- Avoid foods that contain gluten (ie. wheat, oats, rye or barley). Some babies may develop an allergy to gluten if given gluten before 6 months.
- Avoid eggs before 6 months of age.
- Do not add salt or sugar to your baby's food.
- Avoid **whole** nuts until your child is at least **5 years old** - because of the danger of choking.
- It is recommended that children with a family history of asthma, eczema, hay fever or food allergy should avoid peanut-containing products until the age of 3 years. In some cases, it is recommended that breastfeeding mothers avoid peanuts while breastfeeding.

## Avoid until 6 months:



**You can offer your baby thicker puréed foods by increasing the amount of food you give and adding less liquid.**

# Stage 2 - Over 6 months

(Babies who start spoonfeeds at 6 months of age should move rapidly from Stage 1 puréed foods to mashed, lumpy and finger foods)

## Suitable Foods

Foods as in Stage 1, but you can now include:

Well cooked eggs

Other breakfast cereals (containing gluten)

Bread and pasta

Cheese (pasteurised) e.g. grated Cheddar, yogurt

Pasteurised cow's milk can be used in small amounts in foods

## Consistency

Minced or mashed to a less fine texture

## Suitable Drinks

Continue to give breast milk/ formula milk

Cool boiled water (if necessary)

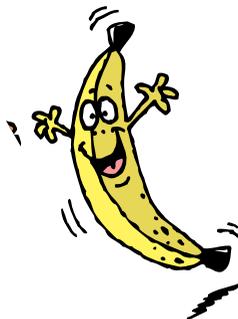
Well-diluted, unsweetened, pure fruit juice at mealtimes. Dilute 1 measure of pure juice to 4 or 5 measures of cooled, boiled water

## Foods to be avoided

Whole nuts and peanut-containing products

Unpasteurised cheese (will state 'made with raw milk' on label)

Undercooked Eggs



# TIPS

**Encourage chewing by giving lumpier foods at mealtimes. Your baby will also enjoy finger food for chewing practice! e.g. slices of peeled apples, banana, fingers of toast or bread, sticks of carrots, cheese cubes - but do not leave your baby alone, in case of choking.**

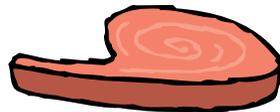


- It is not a good idea to offer smooth purées for too long, as your baby may become lazy about chewing. Make the transition easier by adding a little mashed or grated food into their usual purées.
- Try giving some drinks such as breastmilk, formula or water, from a lidless beaker/cup, from 6 months.
- Introduce yogurt and fromage frais.
- At some meals, well-diluted unsweetened, pure fruit juice can be given.
- Don't forget to introduce variety with new foods!

## NOTE ON IRON:

Babies are born with stores of iron. At around 6 months, these stores begin to run out. It is important to ensure your baby gets enough iron in the diet for healthy growth and development. Include iron-rich foods ( such as lean meat, cereals, beans and green vegetables) in the diet regularly.

### Iron Rich Foods:



Let your baby feed themselves, with your help, even if it means messy fingers. Mealtimes are a time of learning and should be fun. Never leave your baby alone when they are eating.

# Stage 3 – 9 to 12 months

## Suitable Foods

Increase the variety of foods in the baby's diet.  
Most family foods are now suitable.

## Consistency

Chunky mashed texture, moving to food chopped into bite-sized pieces. Serve some finger foods that can be picked up for self-feeding.

## Suitable Drinks

Continue to give breast milk/ formula milk  
Cool boiled water (if necessary)  
Well-diluted unsweetened pure fruit juice at mealtimes.

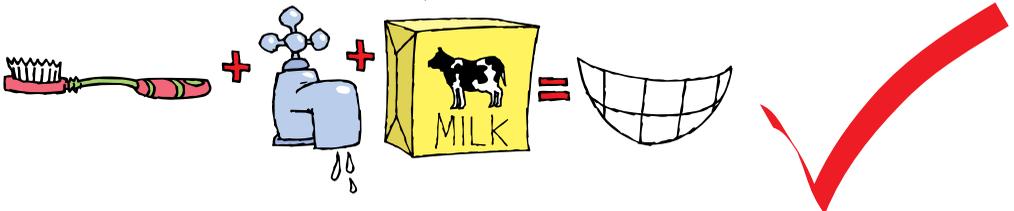
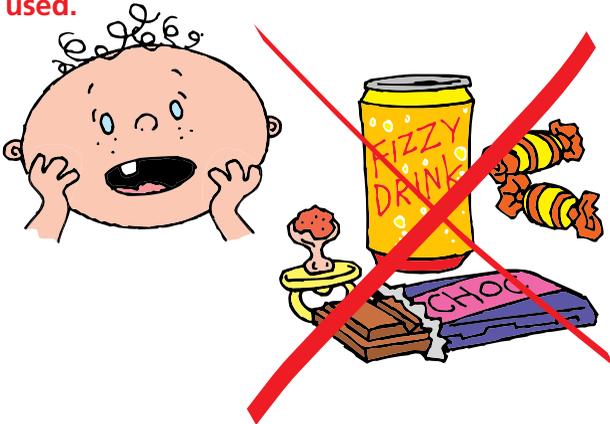
## Foods to be avoided

Whole nuts and peanut-containing products  
Unpasteurised cheese  
Undercooked Eggs

# TIPS

## Your baby's teeth:

- Sugary snacks such as sweet biscuits, chocolate or sweets will damage your baby's teeth.
- Frequent drinks of fruit juice, fruit drinks, squashes and fizzy drinks, between meals, will also cause tooth decay and erosion.
- Try to limit these to meal times; choose unsweetened varieties and dilute well. Milk and water (cooled boiled water, up to 1 year) are the most tooth-friendly drinks.
- Fruit juices should be unsweetened, well diluted (dilute 1 measure of pure juice to 4 or 5 measures of cooled boiled water) and only given in small amounts, at mealtimes, from a cup.
- Teeth should be cleaned gently from the time of their appearance, with a soft brush and water.
- Fluoride toothpaste is not suitable for children under 2 years of age. After two years, a pea-sized amount of toothpaste can be used.



# From one year onwards

- By one year, your baby should be able to eat most of the food eaten by the rest of the family.
- Encourage a wide variety of foods, tastes and textures.
- Regular small meals are advised. Some children may need snacks in between such as yogurts, fruit or bread.



- Children should be encouraged to have approximately one pint of whole cow's milk, per day. Drinking more than this can affect your child's appetite for food.
- Low-fat milk should not be given before 2 years and skimmed milk before 5 years.
- At this stage, all drinks should be from a feeding cup rather than from a bottle.
- Avoid giving sweets, chocolate and other sugary food and drink. These harm the teeth, especially if taken frequently, and may replace more nutritious foods.
- Do not offer whole nuts until your child is at least 5 years old, because of the danger of choking.
- Remember, you are laying the foundations for a healthy eating pattern for life.
- Make meals a social occasion for all the family.
- Set a good example for your baby by eating healthy meals.

## Variety is important



# Your Questions Answered

## What should I do if my baby will not eat?

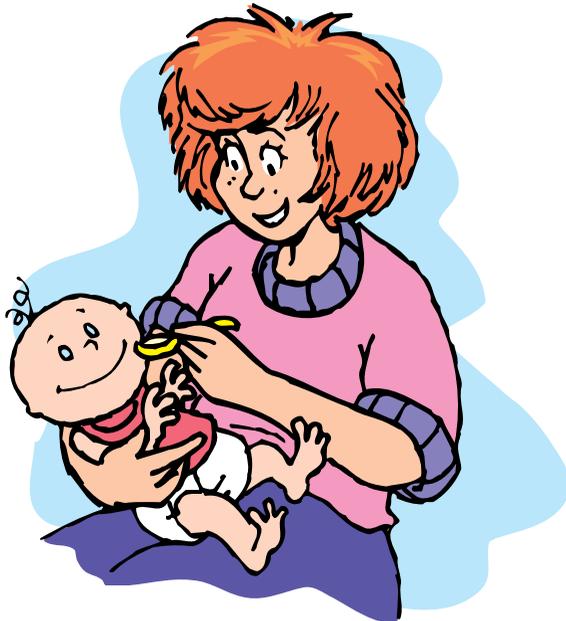
Do not worry - babies like adults can have 'off days'. If food is refused, take the food away and give breast milk or formula milk. If the problem persists, contact your Public Health Nurse.

## Do babies need follow-on-formula milk?

There should be no need for follow-on-formula milks, provided your baby has a nutritious diet with some iron-rich foods. Continue with breast/formula milk until 1 year.

## Is bottled water alright for babies?

Not all bottled waters are suitable for babies. Some waters may have too much sodium present for young babies. Check this with your Public Health Nurse.



## Does my baby need vitamin supplements?

Healthy infants who are breastfed or fed formula milk do not usually require additional vitamins. A good mixed diet that includes a variety of foods will provide all the necessary vitamins. Some breastfed infants however, may require Vitamin D supplements. Discuss this with your Public Health Nurse or GP.

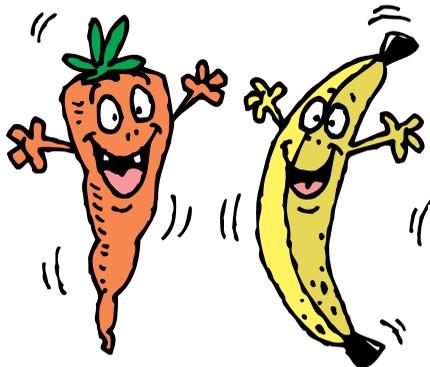
## I am worried about my baby's hard bowel motions. Are these normal?

Bowel motions should be bulky and soft. To avoid constipation be sure to give your baby plenty to drink in addition to feeds. Cooled boiled water should be a regular drink for any baby.

Babies over 4 months should be given fruit and vegetable purées (see Stage 1, page 7); babies over six months should be offered fruit and vegetables in addition to foods recommended (see Stage 2, page 9) such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals.

## Is it safe to microwave babyfoods?

The use of microwave ovens for heating any foods for babies is not generally recommended, because of the dangers of uneven heating or 'hotspots' and the possibility of scalding a baby's mouth. If a microwave is used, the food must be thoroughly heated, left to stand for a few moments, mixed well and allowed to cool to feeding temperature.



# Recipes

## Apple & pear purée

**2 large eating apples, peeled and chopped**

**2 ripe pears, peeled and chopped**

**4 tablespoons water**

Put the fruit and water in a small saucepan and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Purée the fruit in a blender or sieve.

Peach, apricot & melon can also be used.

Makes 5 portions.

**Suitable from 4 months (stage 1)**

## Easy one pot chicken purée

**Small parsnip, sliced**

**1 tsp oil**

**4oz chicken breast cut into chunks**

**3 medium potatoes, peeled & chopped**

**1 medium carrot, trimmed and sliced**

**½ pint water**

Heat oil in the saucepan and sauté the parsnips until softened. Add the chicken breast and sauté for 3-4 minutes. Add the vegetables, pour over the water, bring to the boil & simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and the vegetables are tender. Purée in a blender until the desired consistency.

You can also use lean beef or lamb,

Makes 10 portions

**Suitable from 4 months (stage 1)**

## Chicken delight

**1oz butter/margarine**

**1 tablespoon plain flour**

**4oz milk**

**4oz cooked chicken**

**2 tablespoons (cooked) frozen vegetables**

**1 small mashed potato**

Melt the margarine/butter in a saucepan; stir in the flour and cook for two minutes. Gradually add the milk, stirring continuously. Bring to a gentle boil. Remove from the heat. Cut the chicken into small pieces and mash with the peas & potatoes. Stir into the white sauce. (Tinned tuna fish, salmon & white fish can also be used-be careful to remove even the very small bones from the fish and drain tinned fish).

Makes 2 portions

**Suitable from 6 months (stage 2)**

## Mince & cheese pasta

**1 egg**

**8oz milk**

**2 tablespoons grated cheddar cheese**

**4oz cooked minced meat**

**1 cup cooked pasta (e.g macaroni)**

Cook mince well. Boil pasta. Beat egg. Add milk and cheese to egg. Mix well - a blender is ideal. Add cheese sauce to the pasta & minced meat. Pour into a lightly greased ovenproof container. Bake in a 350°F (180°C, Gas4) oven for about 30 minutes.

Makes 3 portions

**Suitable from 6 months (stage 2)**

# Key Points

- Introduce spoonfeeds at 6 months for exclusively breastfed babies and at 4-6 months for formula fed babies.
- Always stay with baby when eating.
- Never put rusks, cereals or other foods into the bottle.
- Avoid adding sugar or salt to food.
- Encourage your baby to drink from a lidless beaker with 2 handles from 6 months; bottles should be discouraged after the age of one year.
- Cows milk is not suitable as a main drink for children under one year.
- By one year your baby should be able to eat most of the foods eaten by the rest of the family.



**HEALTH PROMOTION UNIT**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND CHILDREN

[www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)

The Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health and Children acknowledges and thanks the Community Dietitian Managers in Health Promotion, in each Health Service Executive area, for their input.

In particular, the South Western Area, Northern Area and East Coast Area of the Health Service Executive, for the original production of this book.

Publication Date: 05/05

Review Date: 11/06

HPUT00381