

Nutrition Facts



Middlesex-London
Baby-Friendly
Initiative

For 1:1 Use Only

Feeding your Formula Fed Vegetarian Baby (6 to 24 months)

A vegetarian diet that includes a wide variety of foods will help your baby grow well and be healthy. However, a vegetarian diet that lacks too many nutrients may put your baby's growth and health at risk.

Introducing Solid Foods to Your Baby

At about 6 months of age, a baby needs more nutrients, especially iron, from solid foods. You can offer iron-fortified infant cereal and pureed meat alternatives such as tofu, dried peas, beans and lentils, nut butters or whole cooked eggs. After these iron rich foods have been given, vegetables, fruit and milk or soy products can follow. Continue feeding your baby formula with the gradual introduction of new foods. Aim to include foods from all four food groups in your infant's daily diet.



Alternative Milks for your Baby

Choose an iron fortified infant formula that is cow's milk based or soy based. You can introduce whole (homo) cow's or fortified whole goat's milk between 9 and 12 months of age, once baby is eating a variety of foods from all food groups. Whole (homo) milk should be offered until 24 months. Fortified soy, rice or almond beverages are not appropriate before the age of two years, due to their low protein and fat content. For babies on soy formula, continue soy formula until 24 months.

Nutrients That Need Special Consideration

Vitamin D

Limited sun exposure, poor vitamin D stores at birth and eating few foods fortified with vitamin D put babies at higher risk for vitamin D deficiency. Cow's milk formula, soy formula and milk are fortified with vitamin D. Other sources of vitamin D include fish, egg yolk and margarine. Vitamin D supplements are generally not necessary for formula fed babies.

Breastmilk is a source of the nutrients listed below.

Calcium

Baby will get enough calcium from about 500 ml (16 oz.) of formula or milk. (See Alternative Milks for your Baby above). Milk products and fortified soy products are good sources of calcium and are important for building strong bones and teeth. Other sources of calcium include cheese, yogurt, dark green leafy vegetables, salmon with bones and legumes.

Protein

Vegetarian babies get protein from formula, tofu, tempeh, veggie "meats", hydrolyzed vegetable protein, eggs, dried beans, peas and lentils, ground nuts and seeds, nut/seed butters, cow or goat's milk, cheese and yogurt. Include sources of protein at all meals.

Vitamin B₁₂

Vitamin B₁₂ is only found in animal and fortified foods. Vitamin B₁₂ is found in formula, milk products and eggs. Read labels on packages of tofu, infant cereals, breakfast cereals and nutritional yeast to see if the food is fortified. Include sources of vitamin B₁₂ daily.



Iron

Iron needs are higher for vegetarians compared to non-vegetarians. This is because iron from plant sources is not absorbed by the body as well as iron from animal sources. If you combine foods that are high in vitamin C with foods that are sources of iron, your baby can absorb the plant-sourced iron better. Include sources of iron and vitamin C at all meals.

Vitamin C rich foods

Cantaloupe, Citrus fruit, Kiwi, Mango, Papaya, Peppers, Potatoes, Strawberries, Tomatoes, Broccoli



Iron rich foods

Chick peas, baked beans, Kidney beans, Lentils, Navy beans, Breakfast cereals, Sesame tahini, Tofu, Wheat germ



Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fats are important fats for a baby's normal brain development and vision. Sources include fatty fish, omega-3 enriched eggs, seaweed, ground flaxseed, flaxseed oil, canola oil, soybeans, soybean oil, tofu, walnuts and walnut oil. Include these foods daily. Discuss the use of supplements with your health care provider.

For more information about feeding babies, refer to the Feeding Your Baby booklet.

Suggested reading:

Melina V, Stepanskiuk J. (2003) *Raising Vegetarian Children: A Guide to Good Health and Family Harmony*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Davis B, Vesanto M. (2000) *Becoming Vegan: The Complete Guide to Adopting a Healthy Plant Based Diet*. Summertown: Book Publishing Company.

References:

Health Canada. (2014). *Nutrition for healthy term infants. Recommendations from six to 24 months*. Retrieved from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/infant-nourisson/recom/recom-6-24-months-6-24-mois-eng.php>.

Practice Based Evidence in Nutrition. (2009) *Vegetarian Eating for Your Child (6 months - 2 years)*.

Revised April 2015