

# Lunchboxes for little ones

Pouaka kai mō ngā tamariki pakupaku



## AROUND 6 MONTHS OLD:

smooth purée, mashed and soft foods\*

The following is a guide to progressing through the different food textures. It is normal for babies to develop at different rates, so be guided by your baby's feeding cues and developmental stage.

Choose the following iron-rich foods, vegetables or fruit as first foods:



### Vegetables

Cooked and puréed courgette, potato, kūmara, pumpkin, carrot, taro. Steamed and puréed broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, pūhā, watercress, taro leaves, pele leaves or bok choy.



### Fruit

Cooked and puréed apple, pear, apricot, plum, papaya or mango. Mashed banana or avocado.



### Legumes, fish, eggs, meat

Cooked and puréed minced meat, minced chicken, fish or seafood. Cooked and mashed tofu, beans or lentils.



### Grains

Iron fortified baby cereal, puréed plain cooked rice or congee (mixed with iron-fortified baby cereal).

\* Remove the skins, pips and seeds from fruit and vegetables before you cook or purée them.

\* To purée, use a blender or push food through a sieve. Use breastmilk or infant formula to create a thinner purée.

## The importance of iron

At 6 months, babies' iron stores are low and it is important for them to eat iron-rich foods daily. Iron supports the baby's rapid growth, brain development and helps fight infection. Foods high in iron include red meat, fish, chicken, beans, lentils, tofu, iron-fortified baby cereal and green leafy vegetables.

### When to start

- Start first foods when your baby shows signs they are ready (at around 6 months of age). For example, they can hold their head up and open their mouth as food approaches.
- It's normal for babies to reject new foods and may take up to 15 tries. Repeated exposure will help a child accept foods.
- Babies are very good at knowing when they have had enough. They may push the food away, turn their head or shut their mouth. Never pressure them to eat.

### What to offer

- Start with spoon-fed purées, then progress over the next few weeks to mashed and soft finger foods.
- To start with, offer breast milk/formula first before food. This will change at around 8-9 months, where food can come first.
- There is no need to introduce one new food at a time unless the food is a common allergy-causing food (eggs, peanuts, cow's milk, tree nuts, soy, sesame seeds, wheat, fish and shellfish).
- Offer a variety of food including naturally bitter, sweet and savoury flavours.
- Try ½ – 2 teaspoons first and gradually increase the amount at each meal. Some babies will eat more than others.

### Tips

- Home-made foods can be frozen in ice cube trays and used over the next 3-4 weeks.
- Throw away any uneaten food left on your baby's plate.

Children can choke on food at any age, but those under five are at higher risk (especially children under three). See **Ministry of Health: Reducing food-related choking for babies and young children at early learning services and first foods**, visit [health.govt.nz](http://health.govt.nz).

[heartfoundation.org.nz](http://heartfoundation.org.nz)



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## 7-9 MONTHS:

**7 months old: mashed and lumpy foods**

**8 months old: soft finger foods, minced and finely chopped foods**

As well as foods previously introduced, choose from the following:



### Vegetables

Cooked and mashed vegetables like carrot, peas, capsicum, mushrooms, silver beet, taro, pūhā, bok choy, spinach. Very soft over-cooked pieces of pumpkin, potato, kūmara, courgette. Steamed soft broccoli and cauliflower florets.



### Fruit

Mashed ripe fruit like banana or avocado. Soft pieces of ripe fruit like kiwifruit, mango, peaches or pears (very ripe).



### Legumes, fish, eggs, meat

Minced lean beef, lamb, pork, chicken. Cooked and mashed fish (no bones). Cooked and mashed eggs (ensure well-cooked). Cooked and mashed tofu, beans and lentils.



### Grains

Iron-fortified infant cereals, porridge, wheat biscuit, wholemeal toast fingers, Rewena bread, bread, steamed dumplings and buns, well-cooked pasta and noodles.



### Milk, yoghurt, cheese

Grated/thin slices of cheese, full-fat plain yoghurt, soy yoghurt or cottage cheese. Continue with breast milk or formula.

\* Remove skins, pips and seeds from fruit and vegetables before cooking or mashing.

\* Legumes include peas, beans and lentils.

## Texture progression

- By 7 months, babies will have moved from puréed foods to mashed/lumpy foods.
- This progression needs to happen quickly to help your baby to develop normal chewing, swallowing and speech development.
- Mash soft foods with a fork.
- You can also offer very soft finger foods that your baby can easily pick up like ripe banana, well-cooked pumpkin or thin slices of cheese.
- Babies do not need teeth to eat finger foods or lumpy textures, they can chew the food with their gums.

## What to offer

- Offer breast milk or formula before meals.
- Offer water with food.
- Gradually increase the amount of food you are providing your baby. Aim for about 2 tablespoons to ½ a cup at one meal before increasing the number of meals.
- Continue to offer foods that your baby may not have liked or even tried. Repeated exposure will help the child accept these foods. Verbal encouragement and role modelling can also help.

## Allergen-causing food

- Babies should be given common allergy-causing foods before 12 months of age to reduce the risk of food allergy development (unless they are already allergic to a food).
- These foods could include smooth peanut or nut butters (thinly spread), cooked fish, well-cooked egg, plain yoghurt, cheese, wheat products, cow's milk in cooking, tofu and ground sesame seeds (tahini).
- Introduce these foods one at a time and offer regularly once accepted (twice per week) to maintain tolerance.  
Visit [allergy.org.nz](http://allergy.org.nz) for more information.



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## 10-12 MONTHS:

**chopped, finger foods, mashed/lumpy, soft**

As well as foods previously introduced, choose from the following:



### Vegetables

Chopped or well-cooked broccoli, cauliflower, courgette, cassava/tapioca, onion, ginger, garlic, mushroom, eggplant and beetroot. Grated raw carrot and finely chopped raw salad vegetables like lettuce and cucumber.



### Fruit

Chopped kiwifruit, orange, pineapple, strawberries, mandarin or watermelon (remove seeds). Peeled and grated raw apple and pear. Blueberries cut into halves or quarters and avocado slices.



### Legumes, fish, eggs, meat

Cooked then minced, shredded or finely chopped meat, chicken and seafood such as fish, kina, pipi, kōura (crayfish), pūpū (periwinkles), parengo (seaweed), pāua or eel. Tofu and tempeh. Fish with bones removed flaked into small pieces. Egg hard-boiled cut into wedges.



### Grains

Rice cakes, iron-fortified wheat biscuits and infant muesli.



### Milk, yoghurt, cheese

Grated or thinly sliced full-fat cheese, full-fat plain yoghurt, cottage cheese, soy yoghurt, soy custard and soy milk in cooking.

\* Small amounts of mild herbs and spices like parsley, basil or cinnamon.

## What to offer

- Continue to offer a range of different tastes and textures including mashed, finely chopped and finger foods.
- Offer solids before breast milk/formula. Offer water with food.
- By 12 months of age, most children will be eating the same types of foods as the rest of the family. You will still need to modify some foods by cutting them into smaller pieces.

## Tips

- Young children don't need the extra salt and sugar found in packaged snacks from the supermarket.
- The best snacks for young children are whole foods like:
  - vegetables
  - fruit
  - full-fat yoghurt
  - well-cooked egg
  - toast with hummus.

## Vitamin C

Most fruit and vegetables provide vitamin C which helps the body to absorb up to four times more iron. Young babies need iron as they are growing rapidly. Iron is important for brain development and to fight infection.

Add fruit and vegetables rich in vitamin C to lean meat, fish, chicken or legumes to increase iron uptake.

Try including these vitamin C and iron combinations:

- minced beef + capsicum or broccoli
- minced chicken + spinach
- mashed chickpeas + pumpkin

Offer soft kiwifruit or orange with iron-containing foods.

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## 12 MONTHS-2 YEARS:

### family foods

As well as foods previously introduced, choose from the following:



### Vegetables

Sticks of cucumber, chopped and cooked carrot sticks, celery, broccoli and cauliflower, chopped lettuce, sliced capsicum, whole cooked sweetcorn kernels and peas.



### Fruit

Cherry tomatoes (quartered), orange/mandarin segments, rock melon, honeydew melon, grapes (quartered), feijoa and plums.



### Legumes, fish, eggs, meat

Chicken drumsticks (skin and bone removed), finely chopped or shredded meats, lentils, legumes, cooked egg and hummus.



### Grains

Wholemeal bread, buns, rolls, pita, chapatti (cut to a size a toddler can hold), pasta shapes, rice and noodles.



### Milk, yoghurt, cheese

Full-fat plain yoghurt, cheese, full-fat cow's milk and calcium enriched alternatives\* such as soy milk.

\* Rice, cereal and nut-based milks contain lower levels of energy and protein than cow's milk and soy milk. These non-dairy milks should only be given to toddlers in place of milk following the advice of a health professional.

## What to offer

- Continue to introduce a range of fruit and vegetables, including those previously less popular.
- Repeated exposure to foods, especially vegetables, can help increase children's acceptance.
- Full-fat cow's milk can now be introduced as a main drink. You can swap to a low-fat milk once your toddler has reached 2 years old.
- Offer no more than 350ml milk as a drink after meals to avoid your toddler's tummy filling up on milk instead of food.
- Offer water and milk from an open cup.

## Tips

- Tea, fruit juice and sweet drinks are not recommended for infants and toddlers. Stick to water and plain milk.
- Our bodies use protein as a source of energy and to build and repair muscle, organs, hair and nails. Protein is unable to be stored by the body, so we need to get it from the food we eat. Both animal and plant foods contain protein.
  - Animal sources: Meat, fish, chicken, eggs, milk, cheese and yoghurt.
  - Plant sources: Soy protein (such as soybeans, tofu and soy milk), grains (quinoa, oats, barley), nuts and legumes (beans, peas and lentils).

## Responsive feeding

- Feed your child in response to their hunger and fullness cues. This protects your child's natural ability to eat according to their body's needs.



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