

Plant-Based Babies: Age 6 Months to 12 Months

Evidence-based advice from Amanda Benham, vegan paediatric dietitian with over 25 years experience.

Age 6-8 Months:

- Continue with breastfeeding (or formula).** If breastfeeding, mother to continue to supplement with Prenatal multivitamin supplement, additional vitamin B12, DHA plus vitamin D and iron if required. Also, mother to continue to use iodised salt and to consume 500ml+ of calcium fortified plant milk daily (or consider calcium supplement).
- Include iron-rich foods in your baby's daily diet.** e.g. iron-fortified baby cereal, tofu, tempeh, well-cooked red lentils and green vegetables.
- Offer a variety of foods from each of the plant food groups.** Aim to start including foods from each of these food groups every day: Grains (e.g. baby cereal, baby pasta, rice), legumes and soy products (e.g. tofu, tempeh, lentils, mashed chick peas, mashed beans), green vegetables (e.g. zucchini, broccoli, spinach, green peas, green beans), other colourful vegetables (e.g. carrot, pumpkin, sweet potato), fruit (e.g. mashed banana, berries, mango, pawpaw, kiwifruit, citrus etc.). Give one teaspoon flaxseed oil daily.
- Introduce plant-based potential allergens.** Offer nut pastes and tahini, one at a time, a few days apart. Also offer wheat (such as a wheat-based baby cereal). If no reaction, keep these each one in your baby's diet for at least the new few weeks/months. Introduce these foods even if there is a family history of allergies (2).
- Get into a routine with one meal first.** Then add another, then another. Include baby in family mealtimes (safely seated in a highchair) and encourage baby to learn to use a spoon as well as to eat some suitable finger foods.
- Supplement from 6 months of age.** Supplement baby daily with vitamin B12 (5+ mcg), vitamin D (400 IU) and DHA (100 mg) (1).



Age 8-12 Months:

- Continue to offer new foods from each of the plant food groups.** Also include some high fat foods daily, such as tahini, peanut butter, other nut butters or avocado.
- Start offering food BEFORE breastmilk.** Offer food before breastmilk from about 8-9 months of age so that food intake increases.
- Introduce water.** Offer water in a baby cup (not a bottle) between meals, so that baby can start to learn to drink from a cup.
- Introduce a fully fortified soymilk.** Start using on breakfast or in cooking but not as a drink.
- Establish a routine.** Offer three meals per day at regular times, ideally with family meals. Include iron-rich foods at every meal (e.g. iron-fortified foods, tofu, tempeh, other soy products, lentils, chickpeas, beans), plus a source of vitamin C to enhance iron absorption. (e.g. include fruit with breakfast and squeeze lemon or lime juice over other meals, or garnish with finely chopped tomato or capsicum).
- Work towards a meal pattern.** Suggested pattern: Breakfast: Cereal + fruit + fortified soymilk; Lunch: Grain (or potato) + legume/tofu/tempeh + green vegetable + other colourful vegetable + vitamin C source + high fat food (tahini, nut butter or avocado). Dinner: Same pattern as lunch. (Give breastmilk or formula between meals or after meals.)
- Continue supplementing.** Continue giving vitamin B12 (5 mcg), vitamin D (400IU) and DHA (100mg) and giving one teaspoon flaxseed oil daily (1).



References: (1) Baroni L, Goggi S, Battaglini R, Berveglieri M, Filippin D, et al. Vegan Nutrition for Mothers and Children: Practical Tools for Healthcare Providers. *Nutrients*. 2018;11(1):5. <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/11/1/5/html>, accessed 1/1/19.

(2) Netting et al. An Australian Consensus on Infant Feeding Guidelines to Prevent Food Allergy: Outcomes from the Australian Infant Feeding Summit. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice* 2017; 5 (6).

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