

# PLANT-BASED BABIES: FROM BIRTH TO 6 MONTHS

## AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN:

- The ideal milk for infants is breastmilk from a healthy, well-nourished mother.** A consultation with a lactation consultant can be helpful if you experience problems with breastfeeding. If breastmilk is not an option, the **only** safe alternative is a commercial infant formula. Both commercial soy and rice-based infant formulae are available. Homemade "formula", nut milks, juices, coconut water and commercial plants milks are NOT suitable for infants as an alternative to breastmilk and can result in serious health consequences and even death.
- If breastfeeding, continue healthy lifestyle practices.** Also, continue supplementing with a Prenatal supplement, additional vitamin B12 (100+ mcg) and 200 mg DHA daily. Take 1000-2000 IU vitamin D (1) (on days when exposure to sun on bare skin is limited) and consider calcium supplementation if having less than 2 cups of calcium-fortified plant milk daily. Have your iron retested and supplement with iron if low. Use iodised salt.
- Vitamin D:** Supplementing your baby directly with 400 IU liquid vitamin D daily from birth is recommended (1), at least on the days that exposure to sunlight on bare skin is limited.
- Vitamin B12:** If you did not supplement vitamin B12 adequately during pregnancy or experienced low vitamin B12 (below 350 pmol/L), supplement your baby directly with liquid vitamin B12 from birth (2), at a dose of at least 5 mcg per day (1).
- Have your child's growth and development monitored.** Ensure that your baby's weight, length and head circumference are recorded and plotted on a growth chart from birth. (Not following a growth curve can be an early sign of issues that are best promptly addressed.) Visit a child health clinic regularly for check-ups if possible.



## AGE 4-6 MONTHS:

- Readiness for food:** Your baby is ready to start complimentary feeding ("solids") when s/he can sit supported, has good head control, watches others eat, opens mouth when food is offered and does not push it out. Do not start solids before 4 months of age. Most babies are ready by 6 months, and it is generally recommended that solids be introduced by or at this age. Continue with breastfeeding (or formula), until at least 12 months of age.
- Introduce one new food at a time.** Offer a new food every 2-3 days at first. Offer foods about 30–60 minutes after breastfeeding. Do not add salt, sugar, margarine or oil to baby's food.
- Iron:** Iron is vital for brain development and breastmilk is a poor source of iron, and babies' stores of iron deplete by about 6 months of age. Therefore, first foods should include iron-rich foods, such as iron-fortified baby cereal, cooked tofu and green vegetables.
- Reduce risk of choking:** Offer foods of appropriate texture, ranging from pureed at first and gradually getting lumpier. If wanting to try baby led weaning, seek further information to reduce choking risk. Avoid giving large chunks of food, whole grapes, nuts, seeds, whole cherry tomatoes. Cook or grate hard fruit and vegetables such as carrot and apple. Ensure legumes are very well cooked and pureed or mashed to assist digestion.
- From 6 months of age:** Supplement your baby directly with 5+ mcg of liquid vitamin B12 (1) and 400 IU of vitamin D (1), if not doing so already. Also give your baby 100mg of liquid DHA and one teaspoon of flaxseed oil (for omega-3) daily (1).
- Continue to have your baby's growth and development monitored by a health professional.**



**References:** Baroni L, Goggi S, Battagliano R, Berveglieri M, Fasan I, 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.

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The information here is of general nature and is not intended to replace individualised dietary advice from an Accredited Practising Dietitian.  
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