

Finger foods

Finger feeding, eating using fingers instead of utensils, is an important step in your baby's development. It improves:

- Biting and chewing skills
- Coordination
- Acceptance of different food textures
- Independence with feeding

Around eight months of age, look to see if your baby is showing these readiness signs:

- Tries to grab the spoon
- Is interested in what you are eating
- Tries to take food from your plate
- Is learning to crawl

Waiting to introduce textured foods, including finger foods, beyond 9-10 months of age can lead to feeding difficulties when your baby is 12 months and older.

It doesn't matter if your baby only has a couple of teeth. Babies can gum soft pieces of food before they have teeth.

Expect a mess when your baby is learning to finger feed. Allow your baby to practice feeding themselves. To help with clean up time, place a mat on the floor or use a bib with a pocket to catch dropped food. Wait until the end of the meal to use a damp wash cloth to clean up spills and sticky hands.

At the beginning, you may find that your baby grabs the food with their fist and scrapes the pieces into their mouth. In time, they will use their thumb and pointer finger (pincer grip) to pick up the food.

What about gagging?

When babies try new textures, including finger foods, they may gag as part of the normal learning process or to prevent choking. This happens when the food goes to the back of the throat without being swallowed. If gagging occurs, remain calm. If gagging continues or gets worse, contact your child's health care provider.



Feeding safety tips

- Wash your baby's hands before eating
- Have your baby sit upright in a highchair, or booster seat if they are older
- Allow your baby to eat at their own pace
- Supervise your baby while eating
- Eat together when possible; you are your baby's best role model

Food "puffs" and rice rusks (e.g., Baby Mum Mums[®]) are ok to offer when starting finger foods but they offer little nutrition and are not a substitute for offering pieces of healthy table foods.

Finger foods beyond one year of age

Toddlers and preschoolers love to be independent so continue to offer finger foods while they are still learning how to use a fork and spoon. Some children prefer small pieces of food while others prefer longer, thin strips so they can hold the food and take bites.

Finger food ideas

Try these food ideas but do not limit to just the ideas you see on this list

Vegetables and fruit

Broccoli	Green peas
Carrots	Potato
Cauliflower	Sweet potato
Green beans	Squash

Tips:

- Cook until soft
- Fresh, frozen or canned that are low-sodium or rinsed well
- Offer orange and green vegetables daily

Apple	Kiwi
Avocado	Mango
Banana	Peach
Blueberries	Pear
Cantaloupe	Papaya
Grapes, cut up	Strawberries

Tips:

- If not fresh or frozen, choose canned in water or juice
- Boil or steam hard fruit (e.g., apples) until soft
- Peel fruit and remove seeds and pits

Milk and alternatives

Cheese	Cheese curds
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Tips:

- Choose only pasteurized milk products
- Choose full fat products. Avoid low-fat and fat-free options

Grain products

Bread or toast	Pancake
Cereal	Pasta (e.g., macaroni)
Cereal biscuit	Pita
English muffin	Rice
Muffin	Unsalted cracker
Naan or roti	Waffle

Tips:

- Choose 100% whole grain when possible
- Choose cereals with less than 6 g of sugar per serving (e.g., Cheerios[®], Nutrios[®], Shreddies[®])

Meat and alternatives

Beans and chick peas	Shrimp
Chicken	Soy-based meat substitutes
Egg, whole	Tofu, firm
Edamame, soybeans	Turkey
Fish	Veal
Ground meat, any	

Tips:

- When cooking meat, boil or steam to keep the meat moist
- Try making meatballs or meatloaf using ground beef, chicken, turkey or veal
- Try fish like boneless salmon, tilapia or canned “light” tuna
- Chop up boiled or poached egg, or make scrambled eggs
- Fully cook eggs and meat
- Use a marinade or sauce to moisten meat

Offer soft foods cut into **½ cm (¼ inch) to 1 cm (½ inch)** pieces for babies. This is big enough for little hands to grab without being a choking hazard. As your child gets older, pieces can become bite-sized but still soft.

