

Fact Sheet: 10 Tips For Ensuring Healthy Growth For Your Child From Birth To 5 Years



1 Maintain healthy lifestyle behaviours before and during pregnancy

- Before you start trying to have a baby, aim to be as healthy as possible including being a healthy weight.
- Eat well and be physically active before and during pregnancy (see advice below).
- Talk to your doctor about appropriate pre-conception and pregnancy supplements for your needs.
- Aim for healthy weight gain during pregnancy. This helps mums to be as healthy as possible and reduce potential risks for mum and baby.
- Complications of excess weight gain during pregnancy include gestational diabetes, disorders related to high blood pressure, having a large baby at birth and your likelihood of gaining more weight after pregnancy. Larger babies at birth are also at greater risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease later in life.
- A mum-to-be's body goes through many changes during pregnancy and will be affected by pregnancy in different ways. Speak to your doctor or midwife for individual advice.



[Healthy eating for adults](#)

[Physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines for adults](#)

[Healthy eating during your pregnancy](#)

[Physical activity guidelines during pregnancy](#)

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2 Start by breastfeeding your newborn baby

- Breastfeeding provides many health benefits for mum and baby and is the best option for healthy growth.
- Some mums find breastfeeding difficult to establish, and partners can do a lot to help. There are lots of services and advice available to help with breastfeeding, see "*advice and services*" in table 1, below.
- Sometimes, when breastfeeding is not possible, infant

formula can be used - make sure you select formula that is appropriate for babies from birth to six months (sometimes called 'starter' or 'first' formula), and prepare according to the instructions on the tin or as directed by your health professional.

- Babies instinctively let us know when they are hungry. Take to learn your baby's feeding cues/signs so you can respond to their needs. See "*Baby feeding cues*" below to help with what to look for.
- Until around six months your baby gets all the nutrition needed from breastmilk or infant formula. Continue to breastfeed or formula feed while introducing other foods at around six months until 12 months.
- Any breastfeeding is beneficial to mum and baby, even if you also use formula. You can continue to breastfeed your baby beyond 12 months.
- At 12 months, your baby no longer requires formula and can swap to full cream milk in a cup.
- At the age of 2, your toddler can start having milk that the rest of the family drinks, this can include reduced fat or low fat milk if that is what the rest of the family uses.



[Infant feeding guidelines for health professionals](#)

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[Giving your baby the best start](#)

[Breastfeeding: how can partners help](#)

Raising Children Network

[Baby feeding cues](#)

Queensland Government

[Bottle feeding – nutrition and safety](#)

Better Health Channel (VicHealth)



[Australian Breastfeeding Association](#): Free hotline provides non-judgemental advice from other breastfeeding mums- Helpline 1800 686 268

[Lactation Consultant](#) (pay for service)



NSW: [Child & Family Health Nursing Services](#)

ACT: [Child & Family Centres](#)

NT: [Child Health Service \(community or remote\)](#)

QLD: [Child Health Services](#)

SA: [Child & Family Health Centres](#)

TAS: [Child Health Centres](#)

VIC: [Maternal & Child Health Centres](#)

WA: [Child Health Centres](#)



3 Introduce baby's first solid foods (rich in iron) at around 6 months

- Baby first solid foods are sometimes called weaning foods, but introducing solids means the first things your baby eats other than breastmilk or formula.
- Start to introduce foods to your baby at around six months, when your baby is showing signs of readiness, but not before they are four months old. The link below "*Introducing solids*" has some tips to identify when your

baby might be ready to start solids, and the types of foods you can gradually introduce to your baby.

- Iron is a nutrient that is lacking in breastmilk. Baby's first foods should be rich in iron, such as iron-fortified infant cereals.
- For ideas see the "*Homemade baby food ideas*" below.



4 Set up good eating habits and limit exposure to unhealthy foods

- For advice on what foods and how much young children should have, see "*Food serves for toddlers (1-2 years)*" and "*Healthy eating for children (from 2 years)*" below.
- Offer healthy choices at meal times and for snacks, cut up some vegetables for a great snack. See "*Toddlers: nutrition & fitness*" below.

- Kids may need to try healthy foods (particularly different fruits and vegetables) many times before they decide if they like it (repeated exposure).
- Just like with healthy foods, repeated exposure or tastes of unhealthy foods can also mean kids develop a taste for these foods, and sets up bad eating habits.
- Unhealthy foods are called this because they are not an essential or necessary part of our dietary patterns. They contain high amounts of fat, sugar and salt and should be limited – See "*Healthy eating for children (from 2 years)*" below.
- Examples of unhealthy foods to limit include: savoury crackers, cakes, biscuits, muffins, lollies, fried potato chips and crisps, chocolate, ice-cream, processed meats, takeaway foods and spreads.



[Infant feeding guidelines for health professionals](#)

[Giving your baby the best start](#)

[Food serves for toddlers \(1-2 years\)](#)

[Healthy eating for children \(from 2 years\)](#)

[Homemade baby food ideas](#)

[Introducing solids](#)

[Toddlers: nutrition and fitness](#)

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5 Avoid distractions when feeding your child

- For advice It is important to remove any distractions when trying to feed your child (e.g. turning off the TV).
- Having meals together as a family is a way of giving your child your full attention.
- Babies and young children are naturally good at listening to their feelings of hunger and fullness- they tell us if

they are hungry by stirring, opening their mouth, looking for the nipple; they tell us they are full by turning away or refusing the nipple or spoon.

- If we listen to our children, by feeding them when they are hungry and stopping when they are full, it means they will continue to listen to their body and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight.



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6 Start being active early

- Being physically active is important for lots of things: healthy growth, strong bones and muscles, better mental, emotional and social wellbeing, and healthy weight.
- Tummy time is an important first activity for babies and includes supervised interactive floor-based play.
- Encourage toddlers and children to be involved in a range of different activities, including energetic play.



[24 hour movement guidelines](#) (physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep) from birth to five years

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7 Limit how long your child sits still

- Screens (e.g. television, tablets, mobile phones, game consoles and computers) can:
 - > cause children to spend long periods of time sitting, and reduce their social interaction.
 - > increase how many unhealthy food advertisements children see.
 - > can cause children to over-eat (particularly unhealthy food) if they are not paying attention to how hungry they feel.
- Sitting in a high chair, stroller or car seat (being restrained) for more than an hour is not recommended.
- Quality time sitting can include activities like talking, reading and storytelling and are important for healthy growth and development.



[24 hour movement guidelines](#) (physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep) from birth to five years

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8 Establish a good routine sleep for babies and young children

- Babies, toddlers and young children need much more sleep than adults- they need a good sleep routine, with consistent sleep and wake up times.



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9 Keep an eye on how your child is growing

- All children grow and develop at different rates. Using growth charts are a quick and easy way to keep an eye on how your child is growing.
- Talk to your local child and family health service or your doctor about your child's growth.
- Refer to the "Health record" book for your child (different in each state and territory), see below.



NSW: My Personal Health Record (Blue Book)	TAS: Personal Health Record (Blue Book)
SA: Child Health & Development Record (Blue Book)	NT: NT Child Health Record (Yellow Book)
ACT: My ACT Personal Health Record (Blue Book)	QLD: Personal Health Record (Red Book)
VIC: My Health, Learning and Development Book (Green Book)	WA: Personal Health Record (Purple Book)



10 Be a role model for your child

- Children learn by watching what other people do, particularly their family. Your child will copy what you do, so it is important to be a positive role model.
- You can encourage children to be healthy by eating healthy foods together, limiting unhealthy foods and screen time, and spending time playing with them.

For more information visit www.earlychildhoodobesity.com or find us on twitter @CRE_EPOCH

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