

# Infants 6-11 Months



## Building the Foundation for Healthy Eating



At about 6 months, infants should be introduced to nutrient-rich, developmentally appropriate foods that complement human milk or iron-fortified infant formula feedings. Providing complementary foods helps to ensure adequate nutrition, encourage acceptance of a wide variety of nutritious foods, and set the stage for a lifetime of healthy eating habits.<sup>1,2</sup>



### Dairy's Unique Contributions

The first two years of a baby's life is a critical window to set the foundation for healthy eating habits that may help prevent chronic diseases in the future.<sup>3</sup> Once a baby is developmentally ready, introducing complementary foods like yogurt and cheese is an easy way to familiarize babies to new tastes and textures.

#### Cheese



Cheese comes in a variety of textures from soft and solid, like Cheddar cheese, to lumpy, like cottage cheese. Cheese can also introduce a variety of tastes such as mild, sharp and tangy.

#### Yogurt



Whole milk yogurt (plain, unsweetened) introduces a creamy texture and slightly sour taste.



Yogurt also contains good bacteria, which helps to support digestion at all ages.<sup>4</sup>

### Special Considerations



Offer "finger foods" that babies can feed themselves to help them develop fine motor skills and experience how different foods feel in their hands and in their mouth.



Yogurt and cheese can be introduced in meals and snacks starting around 6 months. Whole cow's milk can be introduced after the baby's first birthday.



It's understandable to be concerned about the development of food allergies. But the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans state there is no evidence that shows the prevention of food allergies by delaying the introduction of allergenic foods beyond when other complementary foods are given.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the opposite might be true. The introduction of potentially allergenic foods during the complementary feeding period is supported by research, pediatrician recommendations and child readiness and may be helpful in reducing the risk of food allergy.<sup>1</sup>



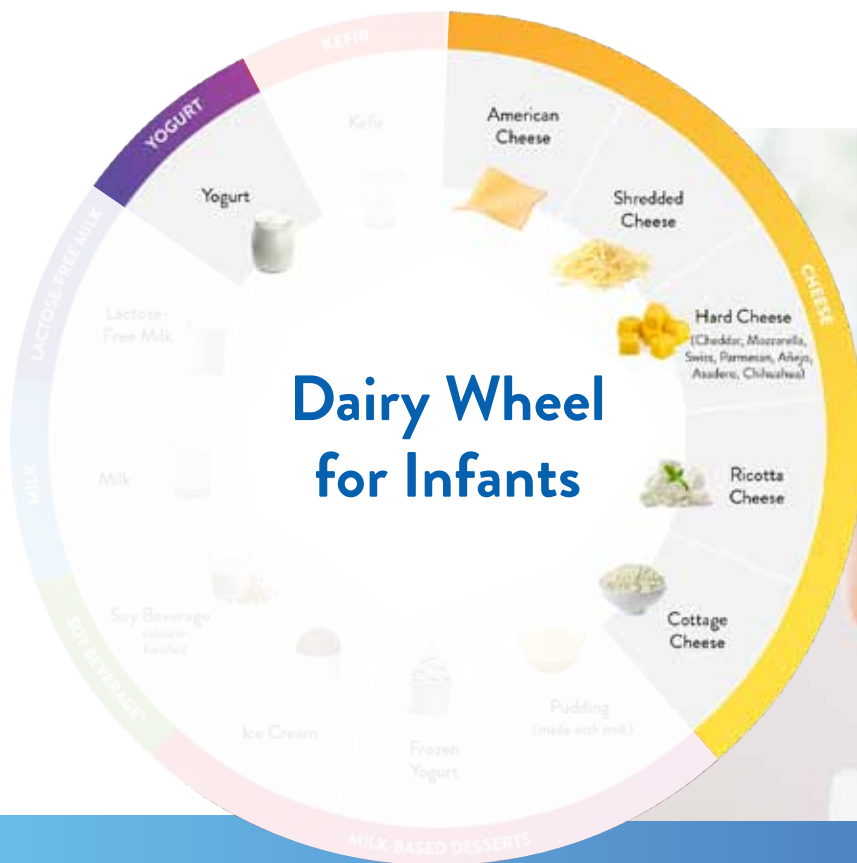
## Make Every Bite & Sip Count



- ✓ Shred or grate cheese so baby can grab as the pincer grasp is being developed and these sizes will be easier to swallow.
- ✓ Melt cheese atop cooked broccoli, cauliflower or carrots and mash or finely chop into bite-sized portions.
- ✓ Introduce one new “single-ingredient” food at a time – wait a few days before adding a new food to ensure baby can tolerate each new food. Remember, it might take several attempts to accept and enjoy a new food.
- ✓ Once baby has embraced a new food, you can pair it with other complementary foods. Serve plain, unsweetened regular or Greek/Icelandic yogurt and cottage cheese alone or with pureed fruits to introduce a variety of tastes and textures at once, like a tart taste balanced with something naturally sweeter like fruit.
- ✓ Start small, don’t stress about having to get a full serving in. Just one bite is a great start to increasing exposure and familiarity, even if more of it ends up on the floor, tray or on baby versus in their mouths!
- ✓ By 7 or 8 months, babies should be eating foods from all food groups. Continue offering a variety of foods over the next several months to expand baby’s range of tastes and textures.

### Sources

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Accessed at [https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Americans\\_2020-2025.pdf](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Scientific Report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. July 2020. Accessed at <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/2020-advisory-committee-report>.
- <sup>3</sup> Perez - Escamilla R, Segura - Perez S, Lott M. Feeding guidelines for infants and young toddlers: A responsive parenting approach. *Healthy Eating Research*. February 2017. Accessed at <https://healthyeatingresearch.org/research/feeding-guidelines-for-infants-and-young-toddlers-a-responsive-parenting-approach/>.
- <sup>4</sup> Donovan SM, Rao G. Health benefits of yogurt among infants and toddlers aged 4 to 24 months: A systematic review. *Nutr Rev*. 2019;77(7):478-486.doi:10.1093/nutrit/nuz009.



Milk, yogurt and cheese are foundational foods that help nourish people throughout life. Dairy foods, including lactose-free varieties, are highly nutritious and accessible options that help fill nutrient gaps and contribute to healthy eating patterns. To learn more about how dairy foods help people thrive across the lifespan, visit [USDAiry.com](http://USDAiry.com).

