

VITAL NUTRIENTS FOR INFANTS

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Babies grow at a miraculous rate in the first year of their life. From tiny sleeping tots to the crawling, standing pre-toddlers in just one year, really requires very serious nutrition. During the first six months, breastmilk meets all the nutritional needs of a growing baby. The beauty of this milk is that it contains all the nutrients as per the needs of the baby. Not only this, it builds up immunity and makes baby strong enough to face the outer world. Hence, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.

obtained from vegetarian sources like spinach and other greens, broccoli, whole grains and dates. These can be introduced from 6 months in the same order as mentioned in mind to give one food at a time. The baby also gets protein from non-animal sources such as powdered nuts, seeds, whole grains, beans as well as some fruits and vegetables. Do not depend on one food to get proteins, make sure the baby gets it from a variety of sources.

Vitamins
All vitamins are essential for baby's overall growth and development. Whole grains like oats, millets, whole wheat, and

essential fatty acids, help to a brain and eye development. DHA and EPA are the essential fatty acids, which our bodies need. Breast milk is the richest source of the brainy fat. In addition, red flax seeds, cooked egg yolk from 8 months and powdered fish like salmon from one year are great way of adding Omega 3.

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velopment. Luckily, there's just the right amount of protein in breast milk, which fulfills a baby's needs in the first six months. And when the baby starts solids, you need to introduce the baby to plenty of protein-rich foods, like eggs, cheese, yogurt, meat, poultry and fish. The baby also gets protein from non-animal sources such as powdered nuts, seeds, whole grains, beans as well as some fruits and vegetables. Do not depend on one food to get proteins, make sure the baby gets it from a variety of sources.

Vitamins
All vitamins are essential for baby's overall growth and development. Whole grains like oats, millets, whole wheat, and

cereals are all great sources of many B vitamins. Introduce the baby to variety of grains, but one at a time, and from eight months onwards.

Vitamin C is not only a great immunity booster but also helps in iron absorption. Fresh fruits and veggies, are the first vitamin C rich foods for a baby.

Fat-soluble vitamin like vitamin A can be obtained from dairy, eggs, and coloured fruits and veggies. Since the food choice for vitamin D is limited, supplements may be needed. It is always better to check with a doctor before starting with the supplements.

To conclude, a baby's need for essential nutrients keep growing as he/she grows older. Including a variety of foods in the baby's diet is the best way to meet the baby's increasing nutritional needs. But, go slow, introduce one food at a time, and do not forget the 3-day rule when starting with any new food.

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It is after six months that the need for certain nutrients increases, which breastmilk alone cannot fulfill. So, as the baby begins the exciting journey of starting solid foods, the emphasis should be on nutrient-dense foods.

The essential nutrients to look out for, are as follows: Iron

Babies are born with good stores of iron which are laid down, while they are in the womb, which lasts for 4-6 months. These stores get depleted by 4-6 months and it is at this time that the need for iron increases. Breast milk is low in Iron and will not be able to replenish stores, hence, when solids are introduced, special emphasis should be on meeting iron needs. Iron is obtained from vegetarian sources, like, spinach and other greens, broccoli, beans, whole grains and dates. These can be gradually introduced from 6 months but in stages, in the same order as mentioned, keeping in mind to give one food at a time. Animal sources of iron include meat, and eggs, which can be given to a baby in cooked form from eight months of age.

When starting with any new food, remember to start with cooked food in small quantities and check for the baby's tolerance before gradually increasing.

Zinc

Zinc is an important mineral required for making proteins and DNA. Plus, it also helps in boosting the baby's immunity. Hence, it is critical to introduce breast-fed babies zinc-rich foods. Foods like, cheese, yogurt, nuts (cashew/pine nut in powdered form), beans, eggs, and meat, are all great sources of zinc. Be careful of introducing these foods at different ages and always starting with small quantities.

Omega 3

Omega 3's or the essential fatty acids, help to boost the baby's brain and eye development, as well as immunity. DHA and EPA are the essential omega 3 fatty acids, which our bodies cannot produce. Breast milk is the richest source of DHA, the brainy fat. In addition, adding powdered flax seeds, cooked egg yolk/chicken from 8 months and powdered walnut or cooked fish like salmon from one year onwards is a great way of adding Omega 3 to a baby's diet.

Proteins

Proteins are vital for a baby's growth and development. Luckily, there's just the right amount of protein in breast milk, which fulfills a baby's needs in the first six months. And when the baby starts solids, you need to introduce the baby to plenty of protein-rich foods, like eggs, cheese, yoghurt, meat, poultry and fish. The baby also gets protein from non-animal sources such as powdered nuts/seeds, whole grains, beans as well as some fruits and vegetables. Do not depend on one food to get proteins, make sure the baby gets it from a variety of sources. cereals are all great sources of many B vitamins. Introduce the baby to variety of grains, but one at a time, and from eight months onwards.

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