

Milestones in Motion

GUIDING FAMILIES THROUGH FEEDING 6 & 9 MONTH OLDS



Healthy nutrition supports children's growth and development. In WIC, you can help families connect their child's nutrition and feeding behaviors to developmental milestones for their age. Reviewing a milestone checklist with families can count as a nutrition education contact when you include WIC-appropriate guidance on growth and development.

Tracking and discussing nutrition-related milestones helps families support their child and identify concerns early. Developmental milestones are things most children (75% or more) can do by a certain age. Children develop at their own pace, and those born premature or with medical complexities may reach milestones on a different timeline.

AGE

NUTRITION-RELATED MILESTONE

by 6 months

by 9 months

- Puts things in their mouth to explore them.
- Closes lips to show they don't want more food.
- Sits without support (A sign of readiness to start solid foods).



Advice for WIC Nutritionists:

Reinforce that sitting without support and showing curiosity about food are positive readiness signs for solids.

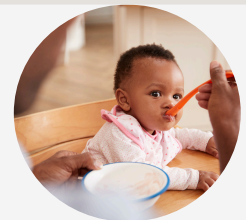
Activities for Building Feeding Skills

To help babies develop healthy eating patterns at this stage:

- **Keep breast milk or formula as the main source of nutrition.** Continue offering regular feedings while slowly adding solid foods when your baby is developmentally ready.
- Watch for readiness cues. Babies are often ready for solid foods around 6 months if they can sit upright with support, reach for food, or open their mouth when food is offered.
- **Start slow and safe.** Introduce a variety of healthy foods and avoid choking hazards ([click here for list](#)).
- **Support your baby's feeding skills and explore new skills.** Begin with smooth purees and gradually add soft, mashed, or finely chopped foods. Keep offering foods your baby refuses at first; repeated exposure builds acceptance. It's normal for babies to push food out with their tongue at first; this reflex fades as control improves.
- **Follow your baby's cues.**
 - **Hunger signs:** reaching for or pointing to foods, opening mouth for a spoon, getting excited when food is near.
 - **Fullness signs:** pushing food away, closing mouth, or turning head from food.
- **Encourage self-feeding and exploration.** Let your baby use their fingers to explore and pick up foods. They'll start with a "raking" motion before learning the "pincer grasp" to grab small pieces with more control. Offer finger foods or small sips from a cup, and eat together; learning is messy and fun!
- **Talk about foods during meals.** Describe foods as you serve them, like saying, "orange, soft carrot" or "green, round pea." Naming foods and textures helps your baby connect words with what they're eating and supports early language development.
- **Encourage movement through play.** Place toys just out of reach to inspire crawling, scooting, or rolling. Celebrate as your baby practices pulling up, standing, and taking steps—these movements build strength and coordination that also support sitting upright and developing the muscle control needed for feeding.
- **Keep consistent routines.** Regular feeding and sleep times help babies feel secure and learn what to expect.

Advice for WIC Nutritionists:

Remind families that mealtime is a learning and bonding experience, not just nourishment.



For more information on developmental milestones and resources to share with families, visit www.cdc.gov/ActEarly and <https://asphn.org/learn-the-signs-act-early/>.

Source: Ideas adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

This resource was supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and funded (in part) by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The findings and conclusions presented have not been formally disseminated by CDC and should not be construed to represent any agency determination or policy. Use of trade names that may be mentioned is for identification only and does not imply endorsement by the CDC.