

# Feeding Our Youngest

## 9 Months

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By now, your baby has developed a long way toward feeding himself. Ideally, his meals are with the rest of the family, and he is helping you (or you are assisting him?) with his feeding. At age 9 months, your baby is developing a more precise grip — he can pick up items with his thumb and forefinger now. Think of the many finger foods you might offer.

One note about variety. Your baby is an individual and may have likes and dislikes you do not have. Be sure to offer her a wide variety of foods — even ones you may not like. She is at the age to form opinions about food, but right now, when food is an adventure, she is especially open to discovery!

This month you should continue to advance the texture and variety of your baby's diet. Remember, one goal of feeding your youngest is to continuously evaluate his abilities and readiness, and to move toward the ultimate — table food!

Some babies are ready sooner than others, and some babies have more spirit of adventure and discovery and may be more open to the change to solid foods. As we have said before, the most successful caregivers are those who follow baby's lead.

Babies vary in how they view bottle or breast-feeding at this point. Some babies really want and need the closeness of the bottle/breastfeedings, and it is comforting to them to continue. Others are so curious and independent that they seem almost insulted by the calming routine. Your baby may be somewhere in between. Just follow



baby's lead and adjust the amount of solids and liquids you offer at meals and snacks. By now, if your baby is eating solids — table foods especially — you may want to offer the breast or formula feeding after the meal, to encourage baby's move toward a more solid diet.

Speaking of snacks, your baby will probably do well with in-between meal feedings, because she still doesn't have a big enough tummy to go straight from one meal to the next without "refueling." This way, baby can manage to eat with the family, without becoming too hungry between meals.

### Building Blocks: Finger Foods



- Small pieces of soft cheese
- Cooked vegetable pieces — sweet potato, carrot, peas, beans, zucchini

- Wafer-type crackers and Cheerio type cereal pieces
- Well-cooked pasta
- Scrambled egg
- Peeled, soft fruit pieces or slices
- Ripe avocado
- Soft, tender small pieces of cooked meat, chicken, and fish

Look how far you both have come in nine quick months. Relax — you and your youngest (the real expert in this) can savor the flavor of successful feeding!

Next month we will talk about your baby's increasing abilities with a spoon!



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**MF3579 August 2021**