

FAMILY MEALTIMES

Healthy food habits start in childhood. Navigating the transition to family foods can take a little practice and patience but will help to create positive feeding behaviours.

You don't have to make different meals for your baby, you may need to adjust how you serve it.



What is your meal time role?

Parent's/caregiver's role:	Baby's role:
Choosing and preparing the right type of food e.g., texture appropriate to their development	Eating the amount of food they want e.g., refusal at first is normal and their appetite can change from one day to the next
Providing regular meals and snacks, responding to their appetite	Learning to eat the family food
Offering healthy foods and drinks from the five food groups	Learning fine motor skills like holding a spoon or finger foods. Meal times can be messy!
Helping eating times to be pleasant e.g., talking and limiting distractions	Watching and learning social aspects of eating as a family
Modelling how to eat in a social way	Watching how others eat e.g., using utensils, closing mouth while chewing
Observing your baby's likes and dislikes and letting them set the pace of trying new foods. Ideally offer at least one safe food at meal times.	Learning to try new foods is great for brain development e.g., exploring smell, touch and taste.



Tips during mealtimes

Wait until food is ready to put your child in the high chair and that they are safely secured.

Avoid drinks with caffeine, such as tea and coffee

Exploring new tastes for infants is important, but adding salt and sugar can hide the flavour.

Talk to your baby about what they are eating e.g., tastes, textures

Limit distractions at the table e.g. TVs, electronic devices or toys



Face your baby so you can interact with them as they try new foods

Allow your baby to use their hands or a spoon or fork to eat

Try different allergy foods such as nut butters.

Ensuring food has been safely prepared e.g. hand hygiene

Avoid force-feeding or using food as a reward, they will let you know when they have had enough

Remember some babies need to try a new food many times before they will eat it, trust that they will learn to like and enjoy a wide range of foods over time.

Family meal ideas

Meal

Ingredients

Shopping tips

<p>Pizza</p>	<p>Pizza base: Lebanese bread or English muffins Toppings: salt-reduced tomato paste, pineapple, ham and grated or chopped vegetables like capsicum, mushroom and a sprinkle of grated cheese</p>	<p>Save some money: buy block cheese and grate it yourself instead of pre-grated cheese</p>
<p>Omelette or scrambled veg eggs</p>	<p>Whisk eggs and add a mixture of meat and vegetables such as ham or tuna and diced tomato, capsicum, zucchini or corn and a sprinkle of cheese</p>	<p>Buy diced canned capsicum, tomatoes and corn. Buy sliced ham instead of pre-diced ham</p>
<p>One pan Mexican</p>	<p>Pan-fry sliced chicken breast or minced meat such as beef, pork or turkey. Add tinned tomatoes and vegetables such as corn, capsicum and tomato. Serve in a wrap or bowl with grated cheese, natural/Greek yoghurt and avocado</p>	<p>Buy natural/Greek yoghurt in a large container. It can be added to lots of different meals. It can also be served with tinned or fresh fruit for a snack</p>
<p>Savoury mince</p>	<p>Pan-fry or slow cook beef, pork, chicken or turkey mince and add lentils or legumes such as red kidney beans or chickpeas add carrot, celery and onion and slowly cook down</p>	<p>Cost & time saver: Use canned legumes/beans (like red kidney beans or chickpeas and frozen pre-cut vegetables</p>



Plan ahead, family life can be busy so try cooking extra and freezing meals for another time

Be mindful of using strong flavoured spices and herbs such as chilli.

Cut/serve foods that babies can hold or feed themselves. Avoid uncut round foods like full grapes

If you have any concerns about your child, contact your local [Child and Family Health Nurse service](#), [Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service \(AMIHS\)](#), [Building Strong Foundations \(BSF\) for Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities](#), or GP.



Health
Hunter New England
Local Health District



HNEkidshealth
Children, Young People & Families



Healthy Beginnings for HNEKids acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, live and gather, recognising their continuing connection to land, water and community.

We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging, as well as Aboriginal people who have provided valuable guidance to the development of this project.