



# *Growing Up Healthy*

A resource booklet about healthy children for  
First Nations and Métis parents in BC

## In this issue:

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- » Active Families



# How Was This Resource Developed?

This series of resources is a response to a growing interest in parenting information for First Nations and Métis parents in BC. The resources share important parenting information. See the back cover for more themes in the series.

Many people contributed to the development of this resource. They generously took time to share their stories, teachings, ideas and photos. They shared their knowledge and experience, provided advice, developed text and reviewed layout. The National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAH) and the First Nations Health Authority would like to thank the following people for their role in developing this resource:

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***ma maʔnam***  
*means mother in*  
*Ktunaxa*

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# Introduction

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Historically, Aboriginal people had a close connection with the land and the food it provided. Food that was taken from the natural world was honoured and respected. It was never wasted, always shared. People were active as part of their daily lives.

This booklet will help you learn how to help your child grow up in a healthy way. It will help families think about healthy food and being active. Most of the things you can do are low or no cost. Eating well and being active can be fun and budget friendly. Being healthy also means getting regular check-ups and learning about your body.

This booklet also tells you about traditional foods, hearing, dental and eye health, immunizations, sleeping, safety, and more. At the end of this booklet you will find resources and services for your family.



*'ama*  
*means mother in*  
*Dakelh*

# Food & You

What you experienced as a child impacts how you parent.

Over time our situations have changed, affecting what we eat and how active we are in our daily lives. Many families do not have places nearby where they can hunt, gather medicines, pick berries or fish, or they no longer have this traditional knowledge. Parents and children spend a lot of time sitting, for school and for work.

The words parents say and the beliefs that parents have, come from their past.

## WHAT ROLE DID FOOD PLAY IN YOUR LIFE?

Were you told you had to eat everything on your plate? YES ☐ NO ☐

Did your family share dinner together regularly? YES ☐ NO ☐

When you were growing up, did you usually have healthy meals? YES ☐ NO ☐

Were you taught about healthy food and about cooking? YES ☐ NO ☐

Did you have enough to eat? YES ☐ NO ☐

Were there times when you went hungry? YES ☐ NO ☐

These questions help you understand your beliefs about food and the beliefs that you are teaching your own children. Think about the difference between emotion and hunger. Ask yourself:

- Am I really hungry? Am I trying to comfort myself?
- Am I giving my child food to make me feel better?



Be careful of using food as a reward, comfort or threat. Here are some examples:

	YOU MAY HEAR OR SEE	TRY INSTEAD
<b>REWARD</b>	Parents telling their children they can have chips if they stop yelling and running around the house	Reminding your children that yelling and running are for outside, and providing an opportunity for active play
<b>COMFORT</b>	Parents comforting themselves with a chocolate bar after a bad day	Comforting yourself by listening to some of your favourite music, talking to a friend or taking a bubble bath
<b>THREAT</b>	Parents telling their children that they won't get pop if their homework is not done	Letting your children know that when their homework is done, you will play a favourite game together

# Food & You

## Food and how you feel

Healthy bodies are an important part of healthy families. What you eat affects how you feel. Some foods may make you feel grouchy, tired or over excited. Some foods may give you a headache or stomach ache. These foods can have the same impact on your child. Think about how you feel after you eat. How long does it take to feel hungry again? With some foods, you can feel hungry a short time later. With other foods, you may feel full for a lot longer. You will also see that in your children. Think about foods that make you feel healthy or feel sick.

## Being a role model

You are a role model for your children. Provide healthy food. Serve healthy portions for you and for your children. Let your children decide when they are full. Family mealtime is an important part of a healthy family routine. It is a time to connect as a family. Turn off the television during meals. As you focus on your children and talk together, you are teaching your children about social skills, family and caring. For more information, see the booklets *Family Connections*, *Fatherhood is Forever* and *Parents as First Teachers*.



*In the past there was a deep respect and gratitude to the animals and plants that gave up their lives so that people could live. It was understood that all life had value and spirit. It was the responsibility of the ones who took life, to respect it. Ceremonies and feasts were ways to respect and honour this relationship.*



# Traditional Foods

Traditional foods vary by season and community. They are rich in protein and nutrients. Most are low in fat and sugar. Salmon and berries are some of the healthiest foods to eat. Hunting, fishing, trapping, growing and gathering required communities to work together and to be physically active.

The first traditional food is breast milk. Breast feeding gives babies everything their growing bodies need and is healthy for mothers too. Other traditional foods include fish, fish eggs, wildlife, root vegetables, seaweed, seafood, mushrooms and berries.

## Here are some examples:

- Dried and smoked salmon.
- Eulachon grease (the oil from a small fish).
- Seaweed as flavouring or eaten dried and toasted.
- Soopolallie berries whipped into a frothy cream.
- Roasted sea cucumbers.
- Steamed clams.
- Roots from yellow glacier lilies and camas.
- Moose, elk and other large and smaller mammals.

If you are interested in trying traditional foods with your family, talk to Wisdom Keepers and Elders in your community. They will know about plants and animals that are safe to eat, and those that are not safe. They will know the protocols for hunting, gathering, etc., and how to prepare the food safely.

Currently, Aboriginal communities have high rates of obesity and diabetes. Babies and children eat a lot of sugar, from drinks, cereals, pastries, candy, etc. Children also eat more fat and salt than they did in the past, from fast food and unhealthy snacks. A return to a more traditional diet (i.e. foods with less sugar, fat and salt) and a return to a more active life, will help keep you and your child healthy.



*Take the time to learn about traditional food protocols such as feasting, sharing, not saying no to food that is offered, Elders eating first, etc. Talk to Elders and Wisdom Keepers in your community.*

## For more information on traditional foods and practices, see:

- **Traditional Food Fact Sheets**  
[www.fnhc.ca/pdf/Traditional\\_Food\\_Facts\\_Sheets.pdf](http://www.fnhc.ca/pdf/Traditional_Food_Facts_Sheets.pdf)
- **Healthy Food Guidelines for First Nations Communities**  
[www.fnhc.ca/pdf/Healthy\\_Food\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_First\\_Nations\\_Communities.pdf](http://www.fnhc.ca/pdf/Healthy_Food_Guidelines_for_First_Nations_Communities.pdf)
- **Métis Cookbook and Guide to Healthy Living**  
[www.naho.ca/documents/metiscentre/english/Cookbook\\_SecondEdition.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/documents/metiscentre/english/Cookbook_SecondEdition.pdf)



# Healthy Food on a Budget

## Feeding your baby

Breast feeding is free and healthy. It is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months, and you can continue to breast feed for up to 2 years and beyond. Once your baby is 6 months old, you can also make your own baby food, instead of buying baby food. See page 18 to learn more.

## Food from the land

A traditional diet is low cost if fish and wildlife are available. Some fish are high in mercury, which can affect your child's developing brain. There are also diseases you can get when hunting and eating wildlife. It is important to know how to keep healthy:

- **Healthy Eating: Choose Fish Low in Mercury** is a guide that tells you the amount of fish that is safe to eat.  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile68m.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile68m.stm)
- **Diseases You Can Get from Wildlife in Western Canada** is a booklet that explains how to care for and prepare wild meat. It also provides guidance on tick and bite prevention.  
[www.environment.gov.sk.ca/wildlife\\_diseases](http://www.environment.gov.sk.ca/wildlife_diseases)

Picking berries is a great way for children to learn about where food comes from. It helps build their confidence. Young children develop coordination and respect for the land as they pick berries and put them in a basket. They learn patience since berry picking is a slow process. Sometimes children pick more berries than adults. Some children eat more berries than they bring home. Either way, children and adults benefit from doing something free and healthy.

Traditional medicine and food walks help children learn about what is safe to eat and the value of all plants. Cultural centres, health centres and Friendship Centres often know traditional Elders or medicine people who can share this knowledge. These centres may have programs that teach about traditional foods and medicines.

## Growing your own food

If you have a window you can grow a herb garden right in your home. You can also use your porch, deck or back yard to grow tomatoes and other vegetables. Dirt, seeds and pots can be inexpensive or free. It is a great family activity. Children like to see how things grow and like to eat foods they have grown.

## Canning and freezing

The less food is processed, the healthier it is. Fresh and frozen foods do not contain added salt, preservatives or additives. Foods grown locally are usually healthier than foods grown far away. Buy or pick fresh fruits and vegetables in season, and then freeze them. Children can help. This is a great way to save money and to eat fresh, healthy foods.

Canning is also a way to take advantage of foods in season. Tomatoes can be canned with herbs and spices. You can use them in meals that you make over the winter. For example, adding cilantro, green peppers and jalapenos creates a base for all Mexican dishes. Adding oregano, basil, garlic, marjoram, rosemary and thyme to tomatoes makes a spaghetti sauce. To learn about canning safely:

- **Food Safety Tips for Home Canning**  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile22.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile22.stm)





## Making your own food

Making food from scratch such as oatmeal, macaroni and cheese, or spaghetti sauce also saves money. Packaging costs money and has a cost to the environment. Are you looking for healthy recipes for your family, that fit your budget, are quick to cook, and kids love to eat? Do a search online using key words such as online recipes, healthy family meals, on a budget, etc. You can also include the names of the food items that you have on hand, in your online search.

## Drinking

Water does not cause cavities and does not contain empty calories. In most communities, tap water is free and safe to drink. If your water is not safe to drink, find out how to have safe water. Sometimes you can boil the water and drink it. Sometimes you will need to drink bottled water.

Children do not need fruit juice. It is much healthier to eat fruit. If you give fruit drinks to your children, look for 100% juice and give your children no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup of fruit juice each day (175 ml or 6 ounces). Pop, fruit cocktails, etc. are high in sugar and low on nutrition – they are not healthy choices for you or your children.

*“We can think of our child as a flower. A flower needs nourishment, love and care. Think of our children as a garden. They need a place to show their beauty and pride.”*

*– Cowichan Tribes Elder, 2009*




# Active Families



Monica Pinette is a Métis Olympic athlete from British Columbia. She participated in the 2004 and 2008 Olympics. She competed in Pentathlon, which includes shooting, fencing, swimming, horseback riding and cross country running. She needed strength, stamina and skill! On the next page she talks about the change from full time athlete to full time parent.

You don't need to be an athlete to live an active life and to provide opportunities for your child to be active. Being active can be a part of everyday life. Walking your baby in a stroller outside or in a shopping centre is free. Inside the house, everyday chores can include squats, lunges or lifts. Push-ups or sit-ups can be done while facing your baby on the floor. Being active with your child can be as simple as walking or biking to the store, instead of driving. It could be playing ball, setting up an obstacle course in your home, or dancing to music on the radio. The most important thing is to just keep moving, have fun and play.





*"I planned my retirement from pentathlon a few years in advance. I also planned how I would train once my professional career was over. I would train only twice a day. It would be so leisurely, alternating one day running and one day swimming and then fitting in fencing and riding. I would be so motivated and have so much energy!*

*For 9 years I trained 4 times a day with 1 rest day per week. Once a year I had a 5-day break and once a year I had a 3-week break. It was hard-core and I was exhausted from it. I was looking forward to training on my own terms. That was two years ago and the reality is I'm lucky if I get out for a run twice a week. That's because I have a baby now. I got pregnant a couple of months after retirement and from that point on my perspective changed, my motivation changed, and my fitness changed...*

*I weigh about the same as I did when I was an athlete, but my body looks different. I'm realistic, I know I'm a mom now; I will never be competition fit again.*

*Every parent knows what sleep deprivation is. This was the biggest challenge for me as a new mom. I thought I knew about being tired from all that pentathlon training, but as an athlete, you can sleep 10 hours a day if you need to. I haven't slept more than 7 hours a night for two years. I have only slept in past 7am a handful of times, so mornings are tough. I drag myself out of bed to run once a week. I just suck it up and do it and then I am so glad I did. Running takes the least amount of time, but I find it difficult to get out of bed to go early before my husband goes to work.*

*Parenting does get easier. I have more confidence now. I have relaxed a bit and Bruno is sleeping well through the nights. I even have moments where I think I could go to the Olympics if parenting were an Olympic sport."*

*– Monica Pinette*





# What You Can Do

## DURING PREGNANCY

Every big or small change that you can make will help you have a healthier pregnancy, and healthier baby.

When you are pregnant there is a lot to learn about staying healthy, for you and your baby. It is also a good time to learn more about being a parent. Prenatal care is important. Learn more about pregnancy from your doctor, midwife or community health nurse. Ask questions and talk about your concerns. Go to prenatal classes if they are available. Think about who can give you support during pregnancy, birth and with your new baby. It may be a partner, family or friends.

### Ask for help from your doctor, midwife or community health nurse:

- If you are feeling sad or anxious during pregnancy or after your baby arrives.
- If it is a struggle not to drink or use drugs. It is safest not to use any alcohol or drugs during pregnancy, unless the medicine is prescribed by your doctor. Even some over-the-counter medicines can be harmful during pregnancy.
- If you are trying to quit or cut back on smoking. Smoking is not healthy for you or your baby, but quitting is not always easy.
- If someone in your life is hurting you physically or emotionally. This is abuse. It is not your fault.
- If you are having trouble buying the healthy food that you need during pregnancy.
- If you have concerns about your pregnancy or feel something is not right.

To learn more and to find the help you need, see the information at the end of this booklet, or visit these websites:

- **Best Chance**  
[www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca)
- **Healthy Start**  
[www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/healthy-start](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/healthy-start)

Pregnancy is a good time to get ready for your baby. Talk to family and other mothers about caring for a new baby. Learn about breast feeding. Buy or borrow the things that you will need. To learn more about safe baby equipment, such as car seats and cribs see:

- **Safe Kids Canada**  
[www.safekidscanada.ca](http://www.safekidscanada.ca)



## 0 TO 6 MONTHS

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### Breast feeding is the best feeding

Breast milk is the only food that your baby needs between birth and 6 months. You can continue to breast feed for up to 2 years and longer.

Breast milk is the healthiest food for your baby. It is always the right temperature, is always ready and is free. It is the first traditional food your baby will have. The first milk is called colostrum. Colostrum is just right for new babies, including antibodies that help protect your baby against infection.

### Breast feeding has benefits for the mother:

- It helps control bleeding after the baby is born.
- It helps make strong bones.
- It protects against some cancers.
- It helps your body be a healthy weight.



*In the past, people needed to be active to live a traditional life. People of all ages worked together to provide for themselves and each other.*

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### Breast feeding has benefits for the baby:

- Babies eat when they are hungry without waiting.
- Babies stop when they have had enough.
- It lowers the risk of ear, chest and stomach infections.
- It lowers the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- It lowers the risk of obesity.
- It helps promote healthy brain development.
- It helps with jaw and tooth development.

Family members can encourage the mother to breast feed. They can support her by making sure that she has healthy things to eat and drink. They can also help with housework and older children.

Your breasts will produce what your baby needs. Babies increase the milk supply by feeding as often as they need. Each baby is different. Some need a lot of milk and some need less. Mothers produce what their babies need, as long as they feed their babies whenever they want to be fed. Breast size does not have anything to do with how much milk you have. As long as your baby is gaining weight, and has enough wet and dirty diapers, there is no need to worry. If your baby is very sleepy in the first few weeks of life, you may need to wake your baby for breast feeding.

Your baby will also need Vitamin D. Talk to your doctor, midwife or community health nurse about the amount that your baby will need.



# What You Can Do

## 0 TO 6 MONTHS

### Expressing and storing breast milk

To warm up saved breast milk, put the container of breast milk in a bowl of warm water. Do not use a microwave, and do not heat breast milk on the stove. The breast milk is ready when it feels warm on your wrist (not hot). To learn more about expressing and storing breast milk safely, talk to your doctor, midwife or community health nurse, or see:

- **Expressing Breast Milk**  
[www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca/you-and-your-baby-0-6/caring-for-your-baby/breastfeeding-your-baby/expressing-breastmilk.html](http://www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca/you-and-your-baby-0-6/caring-for-your-baby/breastfeeding-your-baby/expressing-breastmilk.html)
- **Storing Breast Milk**  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/ue5301.html](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/ue5301.html)





















### Alcohol and breast feeding

It is best not to drink alcohol when you are breast feeding. If you do want to drink alcohol at a special event, it is best to wait until the alcohol is out of your body before breast feeding again. To learn more:

- **Best Chance**  
[www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca/you-and-your-baby-0-6/caring-for-yourself/frequently-asked-questions](http://www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca/you-and-your-baby-0-6/caring-for-yourself/frequently-asked-questions)

Most women can breast feed their babies. Some women make an informed decision to feed their baby formula for medical or personal reasons. It is important to learn how to safely prepare, feed and store formula from your doctor or community health nurse. Information is also available at:

- **Formula Feeding Your Baby: Getting Started**  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile69a.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile69a.stm)
- **Formula Feeding Your Baby: Safely Preparing and Storing Formula**  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile69b.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile69b.stm)

GUIDELINES FOR NURSING MOTHERS									
YOUR BABY'S AGE	1 WEEK							2 WEEKS	3 WEEKS
	1 DAY	2 DAYS	3 DAYS	4 DAYS	5 DAYS	6 DAYS	7 DAYS		
<b>HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU BREASTFEED?</b>  Per day, on average over 24 hours									
	At least 8 feeds per day (every 1 to 3 hours). Your baby is sucking strongly, steadily and swallowing often.								
<b>YOUR BABY'S TUMMY SIZE</b>	 Size of a cherry	 Size of a walnut		 Size of an apricot		 Size of an egg			
<b>WET DIAPERS: HOW MANY, HOW WET</b>  Per day, on average over 24 hours	 At least 1 WET	 At least 2 WET	 At least 3 WET	 At least 4 WET	 At least 6 HEAVY WET WITH PALE YELLOW OR CLEAR URINE				
<b>SOILED DIAPERS: NUMBER AND COLOUR OF STOOLS</b>  Per day, on average over 24 hours	 At least 1 to 2 BLACK OR DARK GREEN		 At least 3 BROWN, GREEN, OR YELLOW		 At least 3 large, SOFT AND SEEDY YELLOW				
<b>YOUR BABY'S WEIGHT</b>	Babies lose an average of 7% of their birth weight in the first 3 days after birth.			From Day 4 onward your baby should gain 20 to 35g per day (2/3 to 1 1/3 oz) and regain his or her birth weight by 10 to 14 days.					
<b>OTHER SIGNS</b>	Your baby should have a strong cry, move actively and wake easily. Your breasts feel softer and less full after breastfeeding.								



## Hearing and talking

Hearing loss can be caused by family history of hearing loss or diseases during pregnancy. It can also happen if your baby is very sick, has ear infections or a head injury. It is best if hearing loss is identified as early as possible.

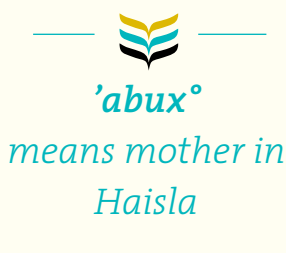
Babies hear loud and soft sounds. By 2 months, a baby will turn toward a sound. Whisper in your baby's ear. Does your baby turn to you? Try the other ear. You can also stand behind your baby, out of sight, and softly say your baby's name. Does your baby look to see where the sound is coming from?

If you have any questions or concerns about your baby's hearing, contact:

- **BC Early Hearing Program**  
Toll-free: 1 866 612 2347 (1 866 61 BCEHP)  
[www.phsa.ca/AgenciesAndServices/Services/BCEarlyHearing](http://www.phsa.ca/AgenciesAndServices/Services/BCEarlyHearing)
- **BC Family Hearing Resource Society** helps parents figure out whether their child may have a hearing problem and provides services for families who have a child with a hearing loss.  
Phone: 604 584 2827  
Toll-Free: 1 877 584 2827  
[www.bcfamilyhearing.com](http://www.bcfamilyhearing.com)

## Healthy teeth

Caring for teeth begins before your baby gets his/her first tooth. Even before your baby has teeth you can clean his/her gums with a soft wet cloth wrapped around your finger, twice a day.



# What You Can Do

## 0 TO 6 MONTHS

### Healthy eyes

At birth, your baby will not see very well, although he/she can see light, shapes and movement. Your baby can't see far but that doesn't matter. Your face is the most interesting thing to your baby. It is normal for your baby's eyes to roll away from each other occasionally when your baby is young. Arrange to have your child's eyes examined at 6 months.

### Visiting the doctor or community health nurse

Your doctor, midwife or community health nurse will check your baby when he/she is about 1 week old. Babies should visit the doctor or community health nurse at 2 months, 4 months and 6 months for a check-up. This is an opportunity to find out how your baby is doing and to ask questions. At each of these appointments your baby will be weighed, measured and will receive an immunization (needle). Immunizations are important. They help your baby avoid serious illnesses. Talk to your doctor, midwife or community health nurse if you have any questions about immunizations.

### Sleeping

Young babies sleep about 16 hours a day, 2 to 4 hours at a time.

### Being active

Find time to be active for your health, and to model healthy ways of living for your baby. Here are some ideas:

- Dance with your baby.
- Do leg lifts with your baby.
- Pick berries with your baby in a carrier.
- Walk or run with your baby in a stroller.
- Be active with other members of the family.

Make sure your baby has time to play on his/her tummy each day.



**Ne'**

*means mother in  
Wet'suwet'en*



## Keeping safe

There are many ways children can be harmed. Some examples are pet bites, things falling on them, an unsafe sleeping place, drowning and burns. In order to keep your baby safe, think about what your baby can reach, and what they can do, as they grow.

- Stay near your baby when he/she is in the tub, even if he/she is in a tub chair or support.
- If you have to do chores or are busy, put your baby in a safe place, such as the crib.
- Many children and babies are hurt every year by pet bites. Stay with your baby if there is an animal nearby. Keep animals away from sleeping babies. When outdoors, take a repellent if there are problems with animals.
- Tables, couches and beds are not safe for babies. Even small babies can move and fall.
- Pads, pillows, comforters or toys are not safe in a baby's bed. Babies can suffocate on soft things.
- Put your baby to sleep on his/her back.
- Keep your baby in the same room with you at night, in his/her own crib.

For more information on making your home safe for your baby:

- BC Children's Hospital has a checklist available online.  
[www.bcchildrens.ca/KidsTeensFam/ChildSafety/SafeStart/SafeStartresources.htm](http://www.bcchildrens.ca/KidsTeensFam/ChildSafety/SafeStart/SafeStartresources.htm)
- BC Children's Hospital has videos and resources to help parents keep their children safe.  
[www.bcchildrens.ca/KidsTeensFam/ChildSafety/SafeStart/](http://www.bcchildrens.ca/KidsTeensFam/ChildSafety/SafeStart/)

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## The most important things you can do to keep your baby safe are:

- Make your home as safe as possible.
- Stay close to your baby.





# What You Can Do

## 7 TO 12 MONTHS

### Starting solid foods

For the first 6 months, the only food your baby needed was breast milk. At around 6 months, your baby is ready to begin eating. Continue to breast feed as well, up to 2 years of age or longer.

Grandparents may be worried that babies are not getting enough to eat. Babies are ready at their own pace. They should never be forced to eat when they are not ready or when they are full. Here are some signs that your baby is ready for solid food:

- Your baby is able to lift his/her head and sit up without help, in order to eat safely.
- Your baby can pick things up and put them into his/her mouth.
- Your baby seems interested in the food eaten by other children and adults.

Start with baby foods that are rich in iron such as pureed meat or iron fortified infant cereal. These foods can be mixed with breast milk. You can also feed your baby pureed fruits and vegetables. Start with one food at a time and feed the same food for several days before introducing something new. That way you will know how your baby responds to each new food.

Babies stop eating when they are full. Babies tell you they are full by turning their head away or by closing their mouth. Babies may eat only a few teaspoons of food at a time. Stop feeding when your baby is full. Between 6 and 12 months most of your baby's food still comes from breast feeding.

Baby food does not have to be bought at the store. It costs less to make your own baby food. Vegetables from your meals can be cooked and pureed for baby. They have less salt, sugar and preservatives than baby food from the store. You do not need to add sugar, salt or spices. Plain food is best.

### Choking

Babies can choke on food or toys. Learn what to do if your baby chokes. It could save your baby's life. Here are some things you can do to avoid choking:

- Toys and other items that fit inside a toilet paper tube are too small for your baby to play with.
- Balloons are not safe for babies.
- Babies should not eat nuts, popcorn or candy.
- Carefully remove bones from fish.
- Remove pits and seeds from fruit.
- Cut up round foods such as grapes.
- Grate raw vegetables such as carrots.
- Cook fruits and vegetables to make them soft.
- Spread a thin layer of sticky foods like peanut butter on a cracker or toast (not on bread).
- Cut meat in small pieces and add broth or breast milk.

### Allergies and intolerance

Food allergies and food intolerances are different.

**A food allergy** is an immune reaction to a food protein. Foods that may result in allergic reactions in some babies (such as eggs, cow's milk, fish or nuts) can be offered at 6 months. Talk to your doctor or community health nurse if you think your baby has a food allergy. An allergic reaction can be mild like itchy eyes, stuffy nose or a skin rash. It can also be more serious, such as stomach pains, cramps, diarrhea or vomiting. The most severe reaction is swelling of the throat, difficulty breathing and shock. Luckily, this is very rare. Call 911 or get medical help right away if your baby is having trouble breathing.

**A food intolerance** is a digestive reaction to a food. For example lactose intolerance is a reaction to the milk sugar, lactose (this generally does not happen in babies). An intolerance can lead to diarrhea, stomach cramps, runny nose, or rash. If you notice your baby has these signs, talk to your doctor or community health nurse.



## Healthy teeth

You can do the following to help your baby have healthy teeth:

- As soon as teeth come in, brush them two times a day. Use a soft baby's toothbrush and a grain of rice-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste to clean teeth.
- When your child has teeth that touch each other, start flossing your baby's teeth.
- Limit juice to no more than one serving ½ cup (120mL or 4 ounces) of 100% unsweetened juice a day in an open cup.
- Candy and sweetened drinks are not safe or healthy for your baby and they are not good for your baby's teeth. Limit foods high in sugar. Offer healthy snacks such as blueberries, soft fruit, or yogurt.

## Hearing and talking

Your baby will practice talking, even before you understand the words. Your baby starts by learning to make sounds then words.

## Healthy eyes

By 1 year your baby's vision is almost as good as an adult's. Your baby can tell the difference between near and far. Your baby will be able to recognize people from a distance.

## Visiting the doctor or community health nurse

Babies should visit the doctor or community health nurse at 9 and 12 months of age for a check-up. During the 12 month visit, they also receive an immunization.

## Sleeping

Older babies sleep about 14 hours a day, and start sleeping through the night.

## Being active

Babies under the age of 1 should be active several times each day. Find time to be active together. Play with your baby every day. Here are some ideas:

- Crawl races or catch me if you can. You can crawl around the house racing your baby. Take turns trying to catch each other or race to a place. Let your baby win. Cheer for your baby. Clap your hands. Teach your baby to clap and cheer.
- Make music together using rattles, drums, pots and plastic serving spoons. Choose objects that can be safely chewed on.
- Listen to music and dance together. This is a great time to share cultural music and teachings with your baby.
- Have your baby put toys in a container. Take them out, and then put them in again. Speak your First Nations or Métis language to say the name of the toy. Cheer when all the items are in or out.

Television, computers and electronic games are not recommended for babies under the age of 1. Limit sitting to no more than 1 hour at a time, for example, in a stroller, high chair or car seat.

## Keeping safe

- Babies put everything in their mouths. Clear the area of anything that a baby shouldn't have.
- Store all household chemicals, medicines, knives and other harmful items where your baby can't get them.
- Be careful of electric cords, wires and things that dangle. As babies start to move, they will reach and grab.
- Use a word like danger to tell your baby to keep away from things that are harmful. Always use the same word and sound alarmed.
- Keep your baby away from cooking and hot food. Many babies are burned by hot food or drinks.
- When walking with your baby, leave your headphones at home. Be aware of things around you.
- Clean your home and your baby's toys regularly to help your baby stay healthy.

# What You Can Do

## 1 TO 3 YEARS

### Healthy eating

Give your toddler a variety of healthy foods. Meals should include foods from 3 or 4 food groups in Canada's Food Guide. Snacks should include foods from 2 food groups. To learn more about the food groups and serving sizes, see:

- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide – First Nations, Inuit and Métis  
[hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/pubs/fnim-pnim/index-eng.php](http://hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/pubs/fnim-pnim/index-eng.php)

This table shows you the number of servings of food a toddler needs from each of the food groups each day:

FOOD GROUP	SERVINGS PER DAY
Vegetables and Fruit (for example, berries, apples, carrots, spinach)	4
Grain Products (for example, bread, cereal, bannock, rice, pasta)	3
Milk and Alternatives (for example, milk, yogurt, cheese, soymilk)	2
Meat and Alternatives (for example, fish, meat, eggs, nuts, beans)	1

Toddlers have small stomachs and portion sizes need to be small. They need to eat often. Most toddlers will eat a 1 tablespoon sized serving of a food group, for each year of age. For example:

- A 1 year old would eat 1 tablespoon of cooked peas.
- A 2 year old would eat 2 tablespoons of cooked peas.
- A 3 year old would eat 3 tablespoons of cooked peas.

Every toddler is different, and at times your toddler may be more hungry or less hungry than usual. Let your child decide how much to eat.

When toddlers are hungry, provide healthy finger foods such as cut up fruit, slices of pita bread with hummus, or cut up vegetables. You and your toddler will eat healthy foods if they are always ready to eat. Just be careful about choking. Carrots can be cut into long thin slices to help prevent choking. Grapes can be cut in half. To learn more, see:

- Helping your toddler eat well  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile69d.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile69d.stm)



*Your job is to decide what, when and where to offer food. Your toddler's job is to decide if they want to eat and how much to eat.*

### Healthy teeth

Brush and floss your toddler's teeth each day with a grain of rice-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste to clean teeth. Your toddler should start regular visits to the dentist at 1 year of age. Sealants are most often recommended once the adult teeth start coming in, around age 6. Ask your dental professional if your child needs sealants.

### Hearing and talking

Your toddler will start combining words into sentences.







## Healthy eyes

It is estimated that 80% of learning is based on vision. Children develop, explore and learn about the world by using their eyes. One way to protect a child's eyes and vision is through healthy food and healthy choices. Eat dark green and orange vegetables, fresh fruit and regular servings of fish to help eye health. It is also important for children to avoid second-hand smoke.

As your child grows and starts to explore his/her world, serious eye injuries can occur. This can happen when children play with sharp objects like scissors, pens and sticks. Tell children not to run with sharp objects. Arrange to have your toddler's eyes examined at 3 years of age.

## Visiting your doctor or community health nurse

Remember to take your toddler to the doctor or community health nurse when your toddler is 18 months, 2 and 3 years old for a check-up. At 18 months your toddler will also receive an immunization.

## Sleeping

Toddlers need 10 to 13 hours of sleep, including their afternoon nap. Toddlers get grumpy and begin having tantrums when they are tired. Toddlers may be afraid they will miss something exciting if they sleep. They want to learn and explore as much as they can. A routine will help your toddler sleep. You can help your toddler settle down to sleep by doing something peaceful like reading a book or listening to calm music together.

## Being active

Toddlers need at least 3 hours of physical activity every day. Playing games and going outside to play are great ways to have active minds and bodies. Activities can focus on movement. Here are some ideas:

- Do the hokey pokey. Teach children about right, left, up, down and getting their bodies moving.
- Play outside in the snow, sand or water to learn about fluids, solids, changing shapes and volumes.
- Pretend to be different animals. For example, fly like an eagle high in the sky, pretend to be a salmon swimming in the water, or a moose walking through the forest.

Help your child build coordination and skills:

- String large beads on a shoelace.
- Using a large crayon, draw large circles, vertical and horizontal lines.
- Kick or roll a large ball to each other.

Toddlers should not be expected to sit more than 1 hour at a time, for example, in a stroller, high chair or car seat. Television, computers and electronic games should be limited to less than 1 hour per day for toddlers.

## Keeping safe

Toddlers are very active and curious. They move quickly. It is important to keep a close eye on your toddler at all times.



*Make healthy eating fun and you build a lifetime of good eating habits.*

# What You Can Do

## 4 TO 6 YEARS

### Healthy eating

Children will make healthy food choices if you have healthy food in your home. Children love to help in the kitchen and will eat food that they pick out and prepare. Try something new. Lettuce roll ups are a fun way to eat tuna. Children may need to be offered a new food several times before they eat it. So keep trying!

Continue to serve a variety of healthy foods from all 4 food groups of Canada's Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Take children to the grocery store. Show them healthy foods. Have your child pick out 1 new fruit and vegetable. Choose a different colour each time. Choose a recipe and make it together.

The following table shows you the number of servings of food a young child needs from each of the food groups each day.

FOOD GROUP	SERVINGS PER DAY
Vegetables and Fruit (for example, berries, apples, carrots, spinach)	5
Grain Products (for example, bread, cereal, bannock, rice, pasta)	4
Milk and Alternatives (for example, milk, yogurt, cheese, soymilk)	2
Meat and Alternatives (for example, fish, meat, eggs, nuts, beans)	1

Young children have high energy levels and need to eat often. They are all different. Let your child decide how much food to eat from the healthy choices you offer. Most young children will eat a ½ cup serving of a food group, for example, ½ cup of sliced banana. To learn more, see:

- **Healthy Eating for Children**  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/tn9188.html](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/tn9188.html)

### Keeping safe

Teach your child safety rules for their new skills, such as riding their bike, crossing a street, and getting off the school bus, etc.

### Healthy teeth

- Help your child to brush his/her teeth twice a day for 2 minutes each time.
- Teach him/her to do some brushing. You can finish up, making sure their teeth are clean.
- Floss your child's teeth every day.
- Start using toothpaste. Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. Teach your child to spit rather than swallow after brushing.

### Hearing and talking

Your child may know 1,500 or more words and may be able to speak in sentences of 6 to 8 words. Most children speak clearly enough to be understood by strangers.

### Healthy eyes

Arrange to have your child's eyes examined before they start school.

### Sleeping

Young children need 10 to 12 hours of sleep each night.

### Visiting your doctor or community health nurse

Your child should see the doctor or community health nurse each year. Remember to have your child immunized at 4 to 6 years of age.

### Being active

Find time to be active together. Teach new skills and build imagination:

- Put on plays from books or traditional stories. They are lots of fun for children and parents.
- Choose games that focus on cooperation and sharing. Taking turns and waiting are important things to learn.
- Play freeze tag. The only way that someone can get unfrozen is if someone crawls under their legs.



# How You Can Learn More

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**Aboriginal Friendship Centres** often have programs for pregnant women, parents and children.

Phone: 250 388 5522

Toll-Free: 1 800 990 2432

[www.bcaafc.com](http://www.bcaafc.com)

**Aboriginal Infant Development Programs** work together with families to support the growth and development of young children.

Phone: 250 388 5593

[www.aidp.bc.ca](http://www.aidp.bc.ca)

**Aboriginal Supported Child Development** is a program for children with developmental delays or disabilities and their families.

Phone: 250 388 5593

[www.ascdp.bc.ca](http://www.ascdp.bc.ca)

**BC Aboriginal Head Start Programs** support early childhood development, school readiness and family health and wellness for children from birth to six years old.

Phone: 250 858 4543

[www.bcfhns.org](http://www.bcfhns.org) for on-reserve programs

[www.ahsabc.net](http://www.ahsabc.net) for urban programs

**BC Council for Families** is a source of dependable, current information and advice including parenting programs, online information, and online discussion groups for parents.

[www.bccf.ca/families](http://www.bccf.ca/families)

**BC Ministry of Health** has an online guide to all the toll-free resources in BC.

[www.health.gov.bc.ca/navigation/1-800.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/navigation/1-800.html)

**Best Chance** is an online resource for parents.

[www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca)

**Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program** and

**Community Action Program for Children** programs begin during pregnancy and go up to early childhood. Many of the programs have help for breast feeding, nutrition, food preparation, and also offer resources to help families.

[www.capc-pace.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.capc-pace.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

[www.cpnpc-pcnp.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.cpnpc-pcnp.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

**Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines** give some guidelines for physical activity for children.

[www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP-InfoSheets-early-years-ENG.pdf](http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP-InfoSheets-early-years-ENG.pdf)

**Healthlink BC** directory has information about how and where to find health services in BC.

Phone: 8-1-1

**Healthlink BC Dietitians** can answer your questions about food and nutrition. Call 8-1-1 Monday to Thursday 8am to 8pm PST and Friday 8am to 5pm PST. Or send an email.

[www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/emaildietitian.html](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/emaildietitian.html)

**Immunizations**

[www.bccdc.ca/imm-vac/ImmunizationSchedules/default.htm](http://www.bccdc.ca/imm-vac/ImmunizationSchedules/default.htm)

**Local Libraries** may have books about parenting and child development.

[www.bclibraries.ca](http://www.bclibraries.ca)

**Métis Community Service Society of BC** provides services for parents.

Phone: 250 868 0351

[www.mcsbc.org](http://www.mcsbc.org)

**National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health** is a source of reliable, current information on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis child, youth, and family health.

[www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/en/publications.aspx?sortcode=2.8.10&searchCat=1](http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/en/publications.aspx?sortcode=2.8.10&searchCat=1)

**Playing it Safe** is a booklet with information about childproofing for environmental health.

[www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca](http://www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca)

**Poison Control** – call immediately if you think that your child has been exposed to poison.

Phone: 604 682 5050

Toll-Free: 1 800 567 8911

[www.dpic.org](http://www.dpic.org)

**Pregnancy Outreach Programs** are located throughout BC.

Phone: 604 314 8797

[www.bcapop.ca/programs](http://www.bcapop.ca/programs)



*Parenting never ends. You will always be someone's mother, father, grandparent, auntie or uncle from the day your loved one is born.*



The booklets in this series include:



## Fatherhood is Forever

This booklet about fathering is for First Nations and Métis parents in BC.



## Growing Up Healthy

This booklet about healthy children is for First Nations and Métis parents in BC.



## Family Connections

This booklet about bonding with your child is for First Nations and Métis parents in BC.



## Parents as First Teachers

This booklet about how children learn is for First Nations and Métis parents in BC.

You can view all of the English booklets online at [www.nccah-ccnsa.ca](http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca) or at [www.fnha.ca](http://www.fnha.ca)

Aussi disponibles en français: [www.nccah-ccnsa.ca](http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca)

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