

First Foods: The role of eggs in the first 12 months



INTRODUCING FIRST FOODS

From around 6 months of age, babies need **more nutrients than breastmilk or formula can provide alone**, particularly when it comes to iron and zinc.¹

Current infant feeding guidelines recommend introducing a variety of nutrient-dense foods, including iron-rich foods, from around 6 months of age while continuing breastmilk or formula.^{1,2}



The nutritional role of eggs in infancy

Eggs are a nutrient-dense, developmentally appropriate food recommended to be introduced in the first year of your child's life as they contribute key nutrients important for growth and development.² Eggs are also soft, easy to prepare, and suitable across all stages of complementary feeding.

Protein

Eggs are a high-quality complete protein, meaning they contain all the essential amino acids required for growth and tissue development. Meeting the adequate protein intake during infancy helps with:

- ▶ Muscle and bone development
- ▶ Tissue and organ growth
- ▶ Overall nutritional adequacy

The adequate protein intake changes depending on age and gender. For infants 0-6 months, the adequate intake is 10 grams per day, and for infants 7-12 months it is 14 grams.³ One egg provides 64% to 45% of these recommendations respectively.

References

1 NHMRC. Infant Feeding Guidelines. Canberra: NHMRC; 2012.

2 ASCIA. Infant feeding and allergy prevention guidelines. 2016 (updated guidance).

3 NHMRC; NZ Ministry of Health. Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand including Recommended Dietary Intakes. Canberra: NHMRC; 2006.



Choline

Choline is a vital nutrient supporting infant development. Including eggs early in the diet has been shown to support healthy choline levels in infants.^{4,5} Eggs are one of the richest dietary sources of choline, which plays a role in:

- ▶ Learning and memory
- ▶ Cognitive development
- ▶ Healthy cell structure

Iron

Iron requirements increase significantly around 6 months of age. While eggs are not a primary source of iron, compared to red meat or iron-fortified cereals, eggs can contribute a useful amount to overall intake.



OTHER KEY NUTRIENTS

Eggs also contain:

Vitamin B12 – supports red blood cell formation and brain function

Iodine – crucial for thyroid health and brain development

Selenium – helps support the immune system

Essential fatty acids – support brain and eye development



EGGS AND ALLERGY PREVENTION

Current evidence supports the early introduction of common allergenic foods, including cooked egg, within the first year of life.² Research has shown early introduction of eggs reduces the risk of developing egg allergy.²

How to introduce eggs safely

- ▶ Introduce well-cooked egg in soft textures, such as pureed, mashed, or scrambled, depending on the baby's age and stage of development.
- ▶ Begin with small amounts. If tolerated, continue offering egg regularly as part of your baby's normal diet.

References

3 NHMRC; NZ Ministry of Health. Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand including Recommended Dietary Intakes. Canberra: NHMRC; 2006.

4 Iannotti LL, et al. AJCN. 2017;106(6):1482–1489.

5 Mun JG, et al. Nutrients. 2019;11(5):1125.

