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# EATING RIGHT FROM DAY ONE

Taryn Palmer RDN, LD  
Magic Valley YMCA

As parents and caregivers, deciding between breastfeeding and formula, introducing solids, and then learning to deal with picky eaters can all feel like a tremendous task. But throughout every stage, there are ways to encourage good nutrition and a long lasting, healthy relationship with food.

## **Breast milk vs. Formula**

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of an infant's life. Breast milk provides complete nutrition, as well as providing both mother and baby with numerous health benefits. Breastfeeding is not always possible for every mother and baby, so when choosing a formula look for one fortified with iron. Most importantly, find a feeding routine that is comfortable and peaceful for both mother and baby. A happy, healthy baby is most important.

## **Introducing Solids**

Previous infant feeding recommendations suggested starting solids around 4 months of age, but new research has shown that waiting until children are 6-months-old is truly the ideal. At this point babies' digestive systems are ready for a variety of textures and flavors, most can sit unassisted, and they have better head and neck control.

## **Spoon-feeding vs. Baby-led Weaning**

Most parents begin solid foods by introducing rice cereal on a spoon. The practice of buying or making purees is not wrong, but it may not always be necessary. Historically, commercial baby food has only been around for less than 100 years, which means parents of the past simply fed babies some version of the food already being prepared for the family.

This is the idea behind baby-led weaning: providing age-appropriate babies (6 months or older) with real, whole foods they feed to themselves. This leads to less picky eating, better recognition of hunger and fullness cues, and increased skill development.

Foods offered to baby should be soft in texture and large enough for them to hold and feed to themselves, or about 2-3 inches in length. Examples would be avocado, roasted cauliflower, baked sweet potato, bananas, and whole grain penne pasta. Many parents are afraid of choking, and while some gagging is natural and harmless, creating a safe environment can help reduce choking risks. Be sure baby is sitting upright, minimize distractions, offer appropriate foods and don't put food directly in the baby's mouth—let them feed themselves. This method of feeding may feel messy or uncomfortable at first, but over time you will see it is cheaper and more convenient than spoon-feeding. Not to mention the healthy relationship that is being created between your child and the foods they eat.

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## Sheet Pan Roasted Vegetables

Source: [cookinglight.com](http://cookinglight.com)

### INGREDIENTS:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar, divided
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound peeled cubed butternut squash (about 3 cups)
- 1 pound parsnips, peeled and cut into 1-in. pieces (about 2 1/4 cups)
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 8 ounces small Yukon Gold potatoes, halved
- Cooking spray

### DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Combine oil, mustard, thyme, 2 teaspoons vinegar, salt, and pepper in a bowl, stirring with a whisk. Combine butternut squash, parsnips, Brussels sprouts, and potatoes in a large bowl. Add mustard mixture to squash mixture; toss to coat.

Spread vegetable mixture in a single layer on a foil-lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake at 450°F for 35 minutes or until browned and tender, stirring gently with a spatula after 25 minutes. Remove pan from oven. Drizzle with remaining 1 teaspoon vinegar; toss.