



**POIPOIA TE KĀKANO  
KIA PUĀWAI**

**NURTURE THE SEED AND  
IT WILL BLOSSOM**



**TOI TANGATA®**



NEW ZEALAND'S MĀORI CENTRE  
OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE  
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INDIGENOUS RESEARCH EXCELLENCE



**NGĀ KAI TUATAHI  
MĀ PĒPI:**

**FIRST FOODS FOR PĒPI**

## WHEN TO START SOLID KAI?

Introducing solid kai at the right time is important for supporting the growth and development of your pēpi. Every pēpi is different so let their development and behaviour guide when you start giving them solid kai.

### SIGNS YOUR PĒPI IS READY TO START SOLID KAI

- They have good head control and can sit upright while supported
- They appear to still be hungry after a breast-feed for formula feed
- They can make chewing and biting movements with their tongue
- They have stopped sticking their tongue out when a spoon is placed in their mouth



## WHAT TO FEED PĒPI?

Try to offer pēpi a **variety of kai** such as vegetables, fruit and iron rich baby cereals. Start with smooth pureed kai, progressing onto mashed kai and then soft finger foods over the following weeks.

Offering pēpi kai that is **culturally significant** to you will strengthen their tinana and wairua.

It is important to prioritise kai such as kai moana, pureed meat, iron fortified cereal and beans as these kai are high in iron. This is important for pēpi as their iron stores from birth start to run out by **6 months**.

It is also key to **prioritise vegetables** as first foods as this will help increase their acceptance of vegetables when they are older infants. You could try pureed vegetables such as kamokamo, kumara, kōwhitiwhiti (watercress), pūhā, pumpkin, broccoli, and silver beet.

Breastmilk or infant formula and water are the only drinks pēpi needs between the age of **6-12 months**.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

Watch for the cues your pēpi will show to let you know they are hungry or full.

**When they are hungry**, they may lean forward and open their mouths, follow food with their eyes or get excited when they see kai.

**When they are full**, they may act disinterested, close their mouths, and turn away from the kai or start playing with their kai.

Feeding in response to your pēpi and their cues will help them develop **healthy eating habits**, help you bond with your pēpi and make mealtimes easier.

No one knows your pēpi better than you do. Feeding in response to cues can be a natural and instinctive process for all involved.

Don't be worried if pēpi is fussy with some kai and refuses to eat. Keep trying! It can take up to **10-15 tries** before pēpi likes it.

**Eat together** as a whānau as much as possible. Pēpi will learn so much by watching everyone eat and feeling involved.