



Innovation in Nutrition



Growing up with gel

A guide to introducing gel to your child

Your baby is growing up!

As your baby grows their developmental and nutritional needs change. At around 6 months of age you will be introducing new foods into their diet. As your baby becomes less dependent breast feeding or standard infant formula, your dietitian will be wanting to change the formula (protein substitute) your baby is taking to make sure they get enough protein, vitamins and minerals to meet their growing needs.



Your dietitian has decided for this stage the best protein substitute for your child is

gel

One product providing choice.

Gel can be offered -

1. as a gel
2. as a low volume drink.



Why is **gel** so good at this stage?

Gel is flexible, convenient and offers choice

Gel as a gel

- **Can be given off the spoon** and so matches the **developmental** stage of your baby; moving from liquid to solid food for nutrition.
- **Provides the same consistency every time** and so your baby will know just what to expect.
- **Provides a texture which is similar** to that of many other foods they are taking at this stage.
- **Your baby only needs to take small amounts** to meet their needs. This can promote the weaning process; less formula taken from bottles and water introduced from a sipper cup.

Gel as a low volume drink

- **Means your baby can increase their protein intake** by taking a lower volume of formula.
- **Can be taken from a sip cup** and so reduces the reliance on formula from bottles.
- Ideal for your baby **if they want to take a "milky" drink** during their day.

Gel is nutritious

- **Gel provides** a source of suitable amino acids all in a low volume - as your baby grows, their protein needs will be met.
- **Gel provides** vitamins, minerals and trace elements.



What is gel ?

Gel is a powder containing a mixture of amino acids specifically formulated to suit your baby's metabolic condition, which also contains vitamins, minerals and trace elements.

Gel is available in sachets.

- One sachet gel = 10g Protein Equivalent.
 - No weighing or measuring of ingredients which means no mess.
 - Simple and easy to use - great for transporting outside of the home and ideal for others caring for your baby; grandparents and child-care assistants.
- Increases non-primary care-givers' confidence toward feeding your child.

There are two ways of making up gel - as a smooth ready to feed "gel" or as a low volume drink.

gel as a gel

To make gel as a smooth, ready to feed gel -



Step 1

Empty the contents of the gel sachet into the beaker and add 30mls of cold water.



Step 2

Secure lid and shake well for 10 seconds. Leave stand for 2 minutes, this allows gel to form.



Step 3

Take with a spoon.

Important

- Water or allowed fluids should be taken after the gel.
- Made up gel should be used as soon as possible.
- Make gel fresh each time it is needed.
- Always give gel as prescribed by your dietitian/doctor.

gel as a low volume drink



Step 1

Empty the contents of the gel sachet into the beaker and add 80ml cold water (approx. $\frac{1}{2}$ way up beaker).



Step 2

Secure lid and shake well.



Step 3

Gel is ready to drink. It can be taken directly from the beaker or transferred to your child's favourite sip cup.

The gel range is available unflavoured

- Suitable for babies from 6 months onwards.
- PKU gel is also available as **orange** and **raspberry** flavours; suitable from 1 year onwards.
- Flavour pac sachets are also available - **orange**, **raspberry**, **blackcurrant** and **tropical**. They mix really well with unflavoured gel and taste great. Suitable from 3 years of age.

Contact Vitaflo or your dietitian for more information.



Top tips for giving **gel** as gel

Babies (6 - 12 months)

The first time - giving new foods to a young baby is exciting and can be very entertaining. They are getting used to the taste and texture of food so be prepared for funny faces! Sometimes they may spit the gel or food out - this is normal. It's your child's way of saying "this is new and different and I'm not too sure about it!" Just scoop it up with the spoon and try again!

Offer gel early - Offering gel before many new foods are introduced gives you the best chance at getting your baby to accept it. Some parents introduce gel as the first solid.

Repeat - some babies take at least 10 attempts to accept a new taste - so keep trying and don't give up. They are also learning to take gel off of a spoon; a new skill which for many babies may take weeks to master.

Routine - offer gel at the same time each day - ideally at the start of each meal when your baby is the hungriest. Try keeping the feeding environment familiar. Securing your baby in a high chair with everything needed at hand, such as; prepared gel, bib and spoon, lets your baby know what to expect and helps you to stay organised. Offering water in a sip cup after gel is a great habit to get your baby used to.

Take control - at this stage it's important to make sure your baby takes as much of their prescribed gel as possible. This may mean feeding them until they are ready to feed themselves. If they do want to take the spoon and they are not ready to self-feed, try giving them another one to hold to keep them busy.

And always remember...

Persevere - some days it may feel like it's taking forever to get your baby fed, but don't give up.

Solid foundation - getting gel right from the start will pay dividends in the years to come.

Top tips for giving gel as a low volume drink

Babies (6 - 12 months)

Give it a go - Some babies happily change protein substitute without fuss - give it a try and see how they go!

Introduce gradually - Mix some of your baby's usual protein substitute with a little gel to get them used to the taste. Gradually increase the amount of gel, and decrease the amount of their usual formula. This approach **MUST BE** discussed with your dietitian.

Be consistent and calm - keep the feeding environment the same for your baby each time; continue to offer the gel drink in their favourite sip cup, hold them and smile. Talk to your baby or read them a story as they like your voice. Remember to offer gel drink when they are hungriest. Persistence will pay off in the long run!



Top tips for giving gel

Toddlers and Young Children (1-6 years)

Get them involved - when they are able, let them help to prepare their gel. Children love to feel they are doing something important. They may like to help make up their gel; open the sachet, pour in the water and shake the beaker.

Responsibility - as children become more independent you may start to give them some control for taking their gel such as; which chair to sit in and which cup or beaker to use. Remember, taking the gel should be non-negotiable.

Provide praise and support - Promote your child's positive behaviour with comments such as "good job finishing your gel so quickly". Eating together as a family teaches children the social aspects of meal times and supports their feelings of inclusion. Remind them that in a few sips or mouthfuls, their gel will all be gone.

Remove distractions - when your child is taking gel remember to turn off the TV and remove all toys. Your child needs to give their full attention to finishing their gel.

Stay relaxed and positive - keeping meal and "gel times" relaxed will help your child stay calm. Children respond to peaceful environments in a positive way. Smiling will reinforce your confidence towards their gel and feeding.



gel refusal

Food refusal and fussy eating in toddlers is normal. Parents often find this time particularly frustrating but there are strategies which can help to deal with your young child's behaviour:

Be consistent and stay calm - toddlers respond well to predictable routines and gel should be taken as part of one. Deliver consistent messages in a calm way. "You need to take this gel now" teaches your child that taking gel daily is the way it needs to be. Giving gel before other foods ensures that they are taking gel when they are motivated by hunger.

Avoid gel battles - if your toddler absolutely refuses their gel, do not force them to take it. Avoid showing your frustration and anxiety as young children quickly pick up on this and use it to gain attention. Instead stay calm and reinforce the importance of taking their gel. They may find another more exciting way to gain your attention!

Offer reassurance and encouragement - when your toddler does take their gel, praise them. Take them to the park, or let them have a friend over to reinforce their positive behaviour.

Some children may need extra incentive - reward charts may help; young children will do almost anything for a special sticker!

Gel variations - allow your child to be involved in decisions such as; whether they would like their gel as a "gel" or as a "drink", or if they would like it flavoured. Offering new tastes may help. Flavour pacs are available from Vitaflo and come in **orange**, **raspberry**, **blackcurrant** and **tropical** flavours. Suitable from 3 years onwards.

Remember - young children get tired. Let them take a nap and have them take their gel after this - they are more likely to be happy and co-operate.

Important

If gel refusal is worrying you talk to your dietitian.
Ongoing refusal to gel needs to be addressed.

What about **gel** and ProZero?

ProZero is Vitaflo's protein-free drink.

- Mixing ProZero with gel provides a higher calorie option which is suitable from 6 months onwards. Gel combines really well with ProZero.
- The amount of ProZero can be tailored to your child's individual calorie requirement - *ask your dietitian for more information.*



gel and ProZero – as a higher calorie gel

Combine 1 sachet of gel with 30ml of ProZero (follow instructions as on page 4). This combination is best taken from a spoon.

gel and ProZero – as a higher calorie drink

Combining 1 sachet of gel with 125ml ProZero delivers a higher calorie formula option which is tasty and looks just like a “milky” drink.

ProZero is also great for use with other weaning foods such as permitted vegetables and cereals.

Important

If you wish to use ProZero; for mixing with gel or for using with other weaning foods, speak to your dietitian.



What about giving **gel** when my child is unwell?

Children do become unwell from time to time. This is usually a stressful time for parents; not only does their child feel bad but they often do not want to take their gel.

Ideas to help them take gel –

- Try offering small amounts of gel more frequently.
- Sometimes children will just not take their gel and this must be accepted. Do not force feed them. Keep their fluid intake up, stay calm and keep trying. They will eventually take their gel when they feel better.
- Ask your dietitian about mixing gel with something sweet tasting such as cordial or allowed juice.
- Talk to your dietitian about what to offer when your child is unwell. Have ideas written down for them including; what time to try taking their gel in an “unwell plan”.



How can I obtain gel and ProZero?

- Your dietitian can arrange for free sample packs of gel and ProZero delivered to your door.
- Gel and ProZero are PBS listed so for ongoing supplies, prescriptions from your doctor are needed.
- **Suitability -**
Unflavoured gel and ProZero from 6 months, flavoured gel from 1 year.
- Gel and ProZero are foods for special medical purposes and must be used under medical supervision. Not to be used as a sole source of nutrition. For enteral use only.
- Gel and ProZero can be obtained through your local pharmacy or through Vitaflo's free home pharmacy delivery service V2U.

Vitaflo's comprehensive gel range

Product	For the dietary management of
 PKU gel™	Phenylketonuria
 MSUD gel™	Maple Syrup Urine Disease
 HCU gel™	Homocystinuria
 TYR gel™	Tyrosinaemia
 MMA/PA gel™	Methylmalonic Acidaemia / Propionic Acidaemia
 GA gel™	Glutaric Aciduria type 1



Important

Your Health Care professional will prescribe the appropriate gel for your child. Check the gel sachet is the correct colour when you obtain the gel from your pharmacy. Clear colour coding has been used for patient safety.



Vitaflo's free home pharmacy service.

Call 1800 230 889 or email v2u@vitaflo.com.au to register for this convenient and time saving delivery service.

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Innovation in Nutrition

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