

INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS

Is your baby ready for solid foods?

Look for these signs:

- Does your baby sit in a highchair without support?
- Can your baby hold his head up without wobbling?
- Does your baby open his mouth and lean toward food?
- Is your baby six months or older?



Don't be in a hurry to start solid foods. It is important to be cautious. Here are some things to consider:

- Starting solid foods is part of a transition from breastfeeding/formula-feeding to table foods.
- Slowly introducing other baby foods should add to the nutrition of breast milk or formula, rather than replace it.
- A young baby's stomach and intestines are not ready for solid food. Early introduction of solids can lead to allergies or upset stomach.
- At birth, a baby's ability to swallow is designed for suckling. Young babies have a tongue reflex which automatically pushes solids out of the mouth. This is a sign that a baby is not yet ready for solids.
- Teeth seldom appear until six or seven months of age limiting your baby's ability to chew.
- In the early months, babies connect feeding with cuddling. Feeding is a warm interaction and a time of nurturing and communication between parent and baby. The shift to a plastic coated spoon may be challenging.
- Babies like to imitate their caregivers at around six months of age and will mimic holding a spoon or chewing food.



If you need additional information, contact the Family Health Line at 1-800-451-BABY (2229)

IS YOUR BABY READY?

Most doctors and dieticians recommend starting solids around six months of age. When you decide your baby is ready, keep the following in mind:

- A baby's first solid foods should be single-ingredient foods. Common first foods include: rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula, pureed meat, pureed vegetables and pureed fruits.
- Pick a time when your baby is hungry, but not starving. Start with some breast milk or formula, then try food. Start with a few tablespoons a day and gradually increase. Be careful to follow your baby's hunger cues. If your baby turns away or won't accept the food, do not force your baby to eat more.
- Use a plastic coated baby sized spoon and put a small amount of pureed food in the middle of your baby's tongue. Start with small amounts and allow your baby to take the food off the spoon.
- As your baby gets older, gradually shift from pureed foods to mashed and semi-solids, and, later, finger foods.
- Do not use an infant feeder, syringe or bottle to feed solid foods or diluted cereal.
- Introduce one single-ingredient food at a time. After each new food, watch your baby for four to seven days for signs of an allergic reaction. Signs include: vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, rash, hives, or wheezing. The most common foods to cause allergic reactions in young children are cow's milk, eggs, peanuts, soy, and wheat. If you have a family history of allergies you might consider avoiding those foods.
- Even with solid foods, your baby still needs breast milk or formula - not cow's milk - until age one. Cow's milk can cause allergies if it is given too early.
- Never feed your infant honey.
- Don't feed your baby food right from the jar. Place a small portion on a plate or bowl. The saliva on the spoon can cause the unused food in the jar to spoil.
- Be sure to share your questions with your child's pediatrician.



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