

Starting Solid Foods



Most parents are bombarded with information about when/how to start solid foods, so we hope that this handout will guide you as you start exploring solids with your baby. There are a few hard and fast rules which we will discuss, but also we know that every baby has his or own time table and vary in regard to readiness, motor skills and interest in solids.

We have lots of good information on how to puree a healthy variety of fruits, vegetables and meat for your baby, and it has really gained popularity. We also know that already-prepared foods are available for purchase in a wide variety and help parents immensely in terms of convenience and variety. Home prepared is not always preferable to commercially prepared, and you are welcome to choose whatever works best for your family. Also feel free to choose organic when your budget allows, but it might be good to know that not every pediatrician agrees on how important this is.

- ✓ ***We do not recommend that you prepare your own iron-fortified cereal as this is really tough to get right. Previous recommendations to avoid making your own root vegetable purees (carrot, etc.) really aren't an issue as long as the baby is at least 4 months of age.***

It is rare that we start solid foods of any kind before the age of 4 months. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be fed exclusively breastmilk or infant formula until 4 months of age when “complimentary foods” can be added.

A special point to highlight before getting started:

There have been some important changes in way we introduce food to babies. In 2015, new recommendations came out supporting early introduction of allergenic foods to help reduce the risk of food allergies in children. This is quite different from previous recommendations. However, studies show that early introduction (as early as 4-6 months) of nuts (as in a puree like peanut butter), eggs, meat, citrus, fish and shellfish may lower the likelihood of ever developing food allergies, especially in families with a history of multiple food allergies. The recommendation is now to ***introduce these foods as early as 4 months***, and once we establish that the baby tolerates it, ***keep giving it at least 3 times per week*** to maintain that tolerance.

- ✓ ***In patients with severe eczema or an already known egg allergy, please speak with your pediatrician before starting solids, because early allergy testing is indicated in these patients.***



Here are some important points to keep in mind:

- ✓ No honey until 1 year. This is still true because we hold off on honey because of the risk of botulism, not allergies.
- ✓ Continue breast milk or infant formula until 1 year of age. Do not start substituting whole milk into their diet until 1 year.
- ✓ The amount of breastmilk or infant formula reaches its max at about 6 months of age and solid foods become the predominant source of calories around 9 months of age. This means that as solid foods increase in volume, liquid nutrition will necessarily decrease in volume. This process is very gradual and varies from baby to baby, but generally this rule holds.

4-6 months: Meals once a day; Food is mostly for fun



Traditionally single-grain, iron-fortified cereals are usually introduced first, but for most babies it does not matter which solid food comes first. You can choose a cereal, a fruit or a vegetable. However, babies do need an iron source in their diet no later than 6 months of age whether they have been breast feeding or receiving infant formula.

Other good iron sources include pureed meat, quinoa, and dark green, leafy vegetables. In the beginning, it is best to give your baby one new food at a time, once a day. You do not typically need to wait at least 2 to 3 days before starting another, but would not mix multiple new foods at the same time. Some foods may cause a local reaction (diaper rash, loose stools, rash around the face or wherever the food touched the skin) but this is not likely a true food allergy. We recommend waiting a few weeks and trying these foods again.

- ✓ ***A true allergic reaction that worries us causes hives, swelling around the lips and tongue, vomiting, difficulty breathing, severe fussiness. For any of these reaction, immediately stop the food and call our office.***

A typical diet for a 4-6 month old:

Offer breastmilk or formula first; will not be replacing any milk for solid foods at this point. Then for one meal a day, around breakfast, lunch or dinner, offer about 2-3 oz of a solid food.

- Purred or finely chopped, well-cooked vegetables or fruit
- Boiled down, pureed or finely chopped, well-cooked meats
- Baby cereal; can mix in fruit or vegetables
- Small bites of whole scrambled eggs (egg white included)
- Peanut and other nut butters mixed into fruit or baby cereal

- Average of 28-32 oz of infant formula per day; breastfed babies nurse on demand.

6-9 months: Meals twice a day, increasing to three times a day by nine months

Within a few months of starting solid foods, your baby's daily diet should include a variety of foods each day that may include: Breast milk and/or formula, meats, cereal, vegetables, fruits, eggs, nut butters, fish and dairy (yogurt, cottage cheese). Once your baby can sit up and bring their hands or other objects to their mouth, you can give them "hand foods" like a biter biscuit or a Mum-Mum cracker. They are messy but help develop the skills they will need to feed themselves. Usually by 8-9 months you can also give finger foods (puffs, cheerios) because they will have developed a pincer grasp (thumb-finger grip). Always remember to give your baby soft, easy to swallow foods, and to cut into smaller pieces (usually the size of your finger tip) to avoid choking. Try to keep advancing texture as tolerated depending on your child. Some children can tolerate lumps and small chunks; others need to take it slower.



A typical diet for a 6-9 month old:

- Breast milk (or formula feeding) is still the primary nutrition source. The volume slowly decreases to about 24-28 oz/day by 9 months of age, but varies from baby to baby
- Hand foods (i.e. biscuits, teethers) by about 7-8 mos
- Finger foods (i.e. puffs, cheerios) by 8-9 months
- Continue with well-cooked, finely chopped fruits, vegetables, meats and fish, working on less pureed form
- Scrambled eggs
- Well-cooked pasta
- Softer breads such as pancakes
- Whole milk yogurt and diced cheese, cottage cheese
- Continue with the sippy cup of water with each meal. Consider putting infant formula and breast milk in the cup as well to help them learn milk can come in a variety of ways.

9-12 months: Meals three times a day, and 1-2 snacks per day, moving towards a toddler diet

At each of your child's daily meals, they should be eating about 3-6 oz, or the amount in 1-2 small jars or pouches of baby food. Continue to increase the variety and texture as tolerated. Encourage more finger foods, and increasing independence with eating by offering multiple foods chopped up well on the plate and letting the child decide what they would like to eat.

A typical diet for a 9-12 month old:

- Begin slowly decreasing breast milk or formula and increase solids with a goal of approximately 20 – 24 oz per day of breast milk or formula.
- Gradually increase food volumes as your child desires. It is hard to overfeed them on solids, as they usually get tired and ready to move on to another activity. If you're worried about this, we can always check their growth pattern at their well check to give you some feedback.
- More adult type food, with a good variety of meats, cereal, vegetables, fruits, eggs, nut butters, fish and dairy foods. Keep salt and spices to a minimum, but babies can tolerate some salt and spice in their diet.
- Most babies are more capable of eating citrus fruits now, but keep them chopped up into small bite to avoid choking on the pulp.
- Keep working on a sippy cup so we can eliminate bottles by 12 months
- Juice is never necessary and is discouraged. Breast milk or infant formula and water are adequate.

12 months+ : 3 meals & 2 snacks per day

Continue with the same diet just slowly increasing the amount to 4-6 oz per serving and continuing with a good variety of meats, cereal, vegetables, fruits, eggs, nuts, fish and dairy. At this point, after 12 months, the child can also switch over from breast milk or formula to whole milk. Whole milk is truly needed for the 2nd year of life to help promote brain growth and development. Keep whole milk around 12 – 16 oz per day to avoid issues with constipation, and to make sure they are hungry for a healthy volume and variety of solid foods. You can continue to breast feed as long as you desire, but eliminate night feedings as early as possible for healthy teeth and ears.

A typical diet for a 12 +month old:

- Heart-healthy diet with a good variety of foods. Emphasize vegetables, meats and whole grains.
- **FREQUENT CHOKING HAZARDS** at this age include raw vegetables especially raw carrots, chips and other foods that fragment, hot dogs and grapes that are not cut quite small enough).
- Start playing with a spoon and fork and allow the “mess” as often as you can tolerate.
- Start working to remove the bottle and be only on a sippy cup (water and or milk) by 15 months.



Forming good nutritional habits early in life is essential for healthy growth and development throughout childhood. Try to limit sugar and salt and make healthy food choices early on, to create a good framework as your child grows. We know that the best way for children to be good eaters is to have healthy eating

habits modeled for them daily by their parents, so eat healthy yourself. Remember if at any point along the way, you have questions or concerns; please feel free to contact us. We are always here to help!