

Feeding Solid Foods

Your baby should still be taking breast milk or infant formula. Most babies now take about 6 ounces every 4 to 5 hours.

Never leave the baby in bed with a bottle because it can lead to tooth decay. Don't give your baby a bottle just to quiet him when he really isn't hungry. Babies who spend too much time with a bottle in their mouth have more ear infections. They also start to use the bottle as a security object, which makes weaning more difficult.

Starting Solid Foods

Most babies are ready to eat solid foods at 4 to 6 months of age. Before this age, most babies do not have enough control over their tongues and mouth muscles. Instead of swallowing the food, they push their tongues against the spoon or the food. This tongue-pushing reflex helps babies when they are nursing or drinking from a bottle. Most babies lose this reflex at about 4 months of age. Energy needs of babies increase around this age as well, making this an ideal time to introduce solids.

You may start solid foods at any feeding. At first you may want to pick a time when you do not have many distractions. However, keep in mind that as your child gets older, she will want to eat with the rest of the family.

Feeding your baby solid foods

To prevent choking, make sure your baby is sitting up when you introduce solid foods. If your baby cries or turns away when you give him the food, do not force the issue. It is more important that you both enjoy mealtimes than for your baby to start solids by a specific date. Go back to nursing or bottle-feeding exclusively for a week or two, then try again.

It is important for your baby to get used to the process of eating sitting up, taking bites from a spoon, resting between bites, and stopping when full. Always use a spoon to feed your baby solid foods. Some parents try putting solid foods in a bottle or infant feeder with a nipple. This is not a good idea. Feeding your baby this way can cause choking. It also greatly increases the amount of food your baby eats and can cause your baby to gain too much weight. These early experiences will help your child learn good eating habits throughout life.

How to start

Start with half a spoonful or less and talk to your baby through the process (“Mmm, see how good this is?”). Your baby may not know what to do at first. She may look confused or insulted, wrinkle her nose, roll the food around her mouth, or reject it altogether. This is a normal reaction, because her feedings have been so different up to this point.

One way to make eating solids for the first time easier is to give your baby a little breast milk or formula first, then switch to very small half-spoonfuls of food, and finish with more little breast milk or formula. This will prevent your baby from getting frustrated when she is very hungry.

Do not be surprised if most of the first few solid feedings wind up on your baby’s face, hands, and bib. Increase the amount of food gradually, with just a teaspoonful or two to start. This allows your baby time to learn how to swallow solids.

What kinds of foods to start

For most babies it does not matter what the first solid foods are. We recommend cereals first. The first cereals usually are offered in this order:

- Rice cereal
- Oatmeal cereal
- Barley cereal

It is a good idea to wait until after 6 months to give your baby wheat and mixed cereals because they may cause allergic reactions in very young babies.

You can use premixed baby cereals in a jar or dry cereals to which you add breast milk, formula, or water. The premixed foods may be easier to use, but the dry ones are richer in iron and allow you to control the thickness of the cereal. Whichever type of cereal you choose make sure that it is made for babies. Only baby foods contain the extra nutrients your child needs at this age.

Once your baby learns to eat one food, gradually give him other foods such as

- Fruit
- Strained vegetables
- Meat

Give your baby one new food at a time, and wait at least 4 days before starting another. After each new food, watch for any allergic reactions such as diarrhea, rash, or vomiting. If any of these occur, stop using the new food and let our office know.

Avoid allergenic foods until after one year of age. Whole cow’s milk, peanuts and peanut butter, strawberries, chocolate and eggs are examples.

First foods by age

Age	Grains	Vegetables	Fruit	Meats and Proteins	Dairy
4-6 Months	Rice Cereal	Acorn Squash	Apples	None	None
	Oat Cereal	Butternut Squash	Bananas		
	Barley Cereal	Peas	Pears		
		Sweet Potatoes			
6-8 Months	Same as Above	Carrots	Apricots	Chicken	Plain Yogurt
		Green Beans	Avocados	Tofu	
		Pumpkin	Nectarines	Turkey	
		Yellow Squash	Peaches		
		Zucchini	Plums		
8-10 Months	Mixed Cereal	Asparagus	Kiwi	Lean Beef	Cream Cheese
	Graham Crackers	Broccoli	Grapes (quartered)	Pinto Beans	Cottage Cheese
	Low Salt Crackers	Cauliflower	Mangos	Black Beans	Ricotta Cheese
	Cheerios	Snow Peas	Papaya	White Beans	
		Spinach		Navy Beans	
		Sugar Snap Peas		Ground Nuts	
		White Potatoes		Ground Seeds	
10-12 Months	Egg Free Pasta	Artichokes	Berries	Lamb	Semi Hard Cheese
	Rice	Beets	Cherries	Liver	
		Corn	Dates		
		Cucumbers	Cantaloupe		
		Eggplant	Citrus Fruits		
			Coconut Milk		
			Pineapple		
			Prunes		

What to expect after starting solids

When your child starts eating solid foods, his stools will become more solid and variable in color. Due to the added sugars and fats, they will have a much stronger odor too. Peas and other green vegetables may turn the stool a deep-green color beets may make it red. (Beets sometimes make urine red as well.) If your baby's meals are not strained, his stools may contain undigested pieces of food, especially hulls of peas or corn, and the skin of tomatoes or other vegetables. All of this is normal. Your child's digestive system is still immature and needs time before it can fully process these new foods. If the stools are extremely loose, watery, or full of mucus, however, it may mean the digestive tract is irritated. In this case, reduce the amount of solids and let him build a tolerance for them a little more slowly. If the stools continue to be loose, watery, or full of mucus, consult your pediatrician to see if your child has a digestive problem.

Juice

You can start juice at the age of 4 to 6 months but should limit it to a few ounces each day. Babies do not need juice. Limit juice intake to no more than 4 ounces a day and offer it only with a meal or snack. Any more than this can fill up your baby, giving her less of an appetite for other, more nutritious foods, including breast milk or formula. Too much juice also can cause diaper rash, diarrhea, or excessive weight gain. To help prevent tooth decay, avoid putting your child to bed with a bottle.

Give your child extra water if she seems to be thirsty between feedings. During the hot months when your child is losing fluid through sweat, offer water two or more times a day. In our area where the water is fluoridated, these feedings also will help prevent future tooth decay

Homemade baby food

It takes less than 30 minutes a week to make your own baby food. By making your own healthy, natural baby food, you're giving your baby a great start and helping to promote good eating habits that can last throughout his life.

Processed baby foods are expensive. The average baby in the United States will eat approximately 600 jars of baby food. Parents who use processed baby food spend an average of \$300 or more on baby food during their baby's first year of life. Making baby food at home is extremely cost-effective. On average, baby food prepared at home can cost as little as \$55 in the first year.

If you choose to make your own baby food the following kit may help.

The Fresh Start Baby Food Kit \$35.95

Order at website below

http://www.mommysthinkin.com/the_fresh_start_baby_food_kit.htm