



Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine  
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## Starting Solid Foods

### *How do I know when my baby is ready for solids?*

Breast milk or iron-fortified formula is all the food needed by infants in the early months.

Between 4 and 6 months of age, weight ~14 - 16 pounds, the clues are:

- Taking in excess of 34-36 ounces of formula per day
- Increasing demand for breast feeding
- Increased night-time awakening from a baby that previously slept through the night

BUT, remember that babies are individuals. Just because one of your children did one thing does not mean the rest will follow. The above is an average, rather than a set rule. Also remember that everything kids do, both cognitive and motor, is on a curve. Some are early, some late and some are in the middle.

### *So how do I start? If your child has met the above criteria...*

- A trial of solid food is indicated. Start with prepared baby cereal (single grain oatmeal).
- First, give your baby  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a breast or bottle feeding
- Second, mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of cereal with 2 ounces of breast milk or formula and feed by spoon. You can adjust the consistency as desired, but don't put the cereal in the bottle.
- The first attempts may not be successful. There is a lot of spitting and funny faces as the infant is experiencing a brand new texture. Keep trying; this is a "learning to eat" period.
- Lastly, finish the meal with breast or formula feeding, if desired by your infant.
- As cereal is accepted, the amount may be slowly increased, and the thickness of the mixture also increased. When about two tablespoonfuls are taken twice daily, usually at the second and fourth feedings of the day, we will discuss the addition of a range of semi-solid foods. THERE IS NO HURRY!!

### *Introduce baby food after you have talked to one of the Docs first.*

Introduce one new strained food every 3 to 5 days, starting with a small amount and increasing according to acceptance and appetite. Stop any food consistently refused, or which causes such reactions as rash, vomiting, cramps, or diarrhea. Try starting with vegetables as they are less sweet. Once you have gotten through the veggies, slowly add the fruits. Then alternate sweet fruits with blander vegetables for a variety. You can mix either or both the fruits and vegetables with cereal if desired.

Later, we will discuss "meat" foods (soups, meat dinners).



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## FOODS FOR THE SECOND SIX MONTHS

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When your baby can pick up bits of food with a thumb to finger grasp, he/she is ready to try “finger bits” of cooked table food such as fruit, vegetables, starchy foods, and tender meat or fowl. Easily “mashed in the mouth” foods like “Cheerios” are a favorite, but offer one at a time. Also hard bread crusts, zwieback, and teething biscuits are suitable, but watch for the toothless “big bite” to avoid choking. Also, watch the size anything you give to your baby to eat. **The number one reason for an infant to choke is an older sibling experimenting with feeding his/her new baby.**

Egg yolks may be started at ~ 10 months. Yogurt may be started after 6 months. Citrus fruit and juice, berries, fish/shell fish, dairy products, nuts should be saved for after 12 months of age. Please ask us first before starting these foods, especially if there are allergies in the family.

As your baby gets closer to one year he/she can eat what you are eating with the exception of the hyperallergenic foods aforementioned.

### THE DON'TS:

Avoid foods which do not soften easily, and pose a choking risk, such as hot dogs, raw vegetables and fruits (except banana), nuts, seeds, unpeeled grapes, and dry raisins. Avoid salt and sugar, and spicy foods. Allergic families should watch for reactions to common allergens such as citrus, egg, tomato, seafood, chocolate, nuts and dairy products. Avoid honey before age 1 year because of the risk of botulism. Karo (corn) syrup is okay and there are no documented cases in the literature of an infant contracting botulism from corn syrup.

Expect changes in stool color, consistency and frequency with each new food addition. Often undigested food particles are visible in the stool; this is harmless. Breast/formula intake may decrease as more solids are taken, but the milk portion of the diet is still important in the second six months. Try some cup (sippy or regular) feeding when finger feeding begins.

The ultimate goal is three meals (and perhaps a snack) by a year of age, using predominantly table foods. Weaning from breast or formula to cows' milk will be discussed after the first birthday; this is flexible.

Vitamin supplements are not necessary if your child is getting a well balanced diet.

**HINT:** By about 18 months, your child should eat what you are eating. No exceptions and be consistent. If they don't want it they shouldn't get an alternative. Your child will not starve if he/she goes a meal or two without eating. That means no milk or snack either! If you start this trend early, you will have far less picky eaters.

Sources: Schmidt: "Your Child's Health" Leach: "Your Baby & Child"  
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