



Feeding Guidelines

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Years ago most babies were started on solid foods at a very early age. We now have more knowledge about infants' digestive systems and the best nutrition for them at each age.

There are several arguments against beginning solid foods too early:

1. The intestines of very young babies are immature and can't fully digest the substances in solid foods.
2. Feeding solids too early may be linked to obesity later in life.
3. Babies may be more likely to have allergic reactions to foods if they are introduced too early.
4. Babies younger than three to four months are usually not ready to feed from a spoon. Feeding cereal or strained foods in a bottle through a nipple may make a baby choke!

We suggest adding solid foods to your baby's diet between four and six months of age (in most cases). Because all babies are individuals, the exact time for introducing solids will vary in each one. We will help you decide when your baby is ready based on his/her weight, intake of breast milk or formula, and appetite. Once we have decided together that your baby is ready for solid foods, these instructions will help you to begin.

Age	Type of Food	Frequency
4-6 mos.	Baby cereals, single grain	1-2 times a day
5-7 mos.	Strained vegetables/fruits	1-2 times a day
7-9 mos.	Strained meats, yogurt, egg yolk	1 time a day
9-12 mos.	Finger foods	

*These are simply suggestions – you may vary what is served at each time of the day according to your own preferences.

SOME GUIDELINES:

1. Solids are offered in addition to, not in place of formula or breast milk. Your child's intake of formula or breast milk may decrease slightly when solids are started, but formula or breast milk still make up the main source of nutrition at this age.
2. Introduce new foods one at a time and wait at least 5-7 days between new foods. This helps in pinpointing any adverse reaction or allergy to a certain food. Signs to watch for are vomiting, diarrhea, rashes or excess gas.

3. Dry cereal should be mixed with formula or breast milk. Babies seem to like cereal fairly runny at first. Start with one tablespoon of dry cereal mixed with 4 tablespoons of formula or breast milk. Your baby may only want a small amount in the beginning. As he/she starts to like the cereal you may make it thicker and increase the quantity. Offer cereal once a day for a week or so, then twice a day. Rice cereal is usually recommended as the first cereal to try as it is easily digested, but you may start with a single grain baby cereal (rice, barley, oatmeal).
4. As juice is of no nutritional value, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises not starting juice until age 2 years. Encourage your baby/toddler to drink water.
5. We usually delay introducing the following foods until your child is one year old, due to their potential for causing allergic reactions: wheat cereals, berries, melon, egg whites, citrus fruits. We recommend delaying fish and nut products, including peanut butter, until at least age 18 months. If there is a strong family history of nut or fish allergies, these should further be delayed until age 3. Honey also should be avoided until one year of age because of the potential of botulism.
6. The time table given is not an exact one – if your child does not start solid foods until six months he will be trying some foods a bit later than listed.
7. Never force your child to eat or to “finish up” the portion of food you have prepared. When your baby turns his/her head away from the spoon, spits food out, or is clearly no longer interested, that's enough.
8. Baby food “desserts” are loaded with sugar – stay away from these. Fruits are all the dessert anyone needs – including your baby.

ONE FINAL NOTE:

Small hard foods that have a very slippery surface can pose a choking hazard to babies and your children. Hard candy, nuts, unpeeled grapes, hot dogs (when uncut or cut in “wheels”) can quickly slip down the throat and into the windpipe. Popcorn can break into small pieces that are easily drawn into the lungs. And lastly, peanut butter can be very hard for a young child to swallow. Stay away from these foods until your child can soften and chew them adequately (usually not until 3 to 4 years). Reviewing the first aid guidelines for aiding a choking infant or child is a very good idea.