



Starting Solid Foods

When to start feeding your baby solids?

The introduction of solid food should be delayed until the infant is able to sit with support and has good head and neck control, usually around 6 months of age.

The Rules:

Have fun & get messy! Introduce one single ingredient food at a time, adding a new food every 3-4 days. Start the new food in the first half of the day, either breakfast or lunch, that way if there is an allergic reaction you will see it.

Amounts per age, Serving Sizes, and Food Types

This is to serve only as a guide and introduction of solids. Each child may vary in the amount of food he or she consumes:

6-7 months

28-32 oz. formula or breast milk

Cereal, fruit, vegetable, meat, grains

1-2 feedings a day

Serving: 2-4 tbsp. or 1-2 oz.

1-2 items at each meal

Pureed foods

Solids per day: 0-4 oz.

7-9 months

28-32 oz. formula or breastmilk

Cereal, fruit, vegetable, meat, grains, dairy

1-3 feedings a day

Serving: 2-3 tbsp. /1-2 oz.

2-3 items at each meal or whole Stage 2 jar

More textures

Solids per day 6-14 oz.

9-12 months

20-28 oz. formula or breastmilk

All above plus finger foods progressing to table foods

3 meals/day

Serving: 3-4 tbsp. / 2 oz.

3 items at each meal or Stage 3 jar

Bite size pieces

Solids per day: 10-18 oz.

6-7 months:

Foods should be used in conjunction with breastmilk or formula to provide a full range of nutrients needed for growth and development. As solids are introduced infants should consume no more than 32 ounces of breast milk or formula/day. Start with iron-fortified cereals. You may start with rice, single grain oats, or barley cereals. Pick a time to try this when your baby is the happiest, such as between bottle/breast feedings once in the morning and again in the evening. Mix 1-2 tbs. of the cereal with breast milk or formula to form a thick milky consistency for the first feeds, then you may gradually thicken the cereal as needed. Serve on a spoon, not in the bottle.

After cereals are established you may now move to pureed foods such as meats, vegetables, and fruits. Offer single-ingredient foods that contain no sugar or salt, and wait three to five days between each new food. Offer your child a wide variety of foods and increase textures as they can tolerate. The key to good nutrition is variety, so mix up the meals day-to-day and meal-to-meal. Be creative and have fun. There are no set rules other than the ones listed above. You can start jars of store-bought foods or you can make your own.

Start with 2 solid feedings a day at 6 months and increase to 3 times a day by 9 months. When your baby has had enough to eat, he or she might turn away from the spoon, lean backward, or refuse to open his or her mouth. Don't force extra bites. As long as your baby's growth is on target, you can be confident that he or she is getting enough to eat.

Remember that your child's stool will change in color, texture, and smell! The stools may become hard, and your child may strain more to poop. If this happens, offer your baby pureed prunes or prune juice. If you use prune juice dilute with equal parts water, and give 1-2 ounces 1-2 times/day. Introduce a sippy cup with water (4-6 oz./day) and practice with meals. This will also help with hard stools.

8-9 months:

By ages 8 months to 10 months, most babies can handle small portions of finely chopped foods, such as soft fruits, vegetables, pasta, eggs, cheese, well-cooked meat, baby crackers and dry cereal. Everything you offer should be soft and about the size of pea. Your child should be encouraged to feed themselves. Yes, kids will make a mess and throw food onto the floor, but this is a learning process. Formula/breastfeeding intake will usually start to decrease about this time. Intake should be 28-32 ounces per day.

12 months:

The big picture goal is that at 1 year of age babies should be having 3 meals with 2 snacks and 12-16 ounces of milk per day. Whole milk, in a cup is started and formula is discontinued. Replace the bottle with straw cup or regular cup.

Foods to avoid:

Be mindful of choking hazards such as hard, round foods (whole grapes, raw carrots, popcorn, and candies) which can lead to choking. Honey should be avoided until 1 year of age due to the association with infant botulism. Cow's milk should be avoided in infants younger than 1 year. Sugar-sweetened beverages during infancy are associated with obesity and dental caries.

Food Allergies:

Allergic reactions are not very common, occurring in 2-5 percent of infants less than 1 year of age. An infant's risk of development of food allergies is strongly influenced by a family history of allergies. Children with an allergic first-degree relative (parent or sibling) have twice the risk of developing a food allergy than are children without an allergic parent. To help prevent food allergies, parents were once told to avoid feeding young children highly allergenic foods such as eggs, fish, peanuts and tree nuts. Today, however, there's no convincing evidence that avoiding these foods during early childhood will help prevent food allergies. New research also suggests that desensitizing at-risk children to peanuts between ages 4 and 11 months may be effective at preventing peanut allergy. If a child is allergic to a food, they usually develop large, red itchy welts called hives, and they may vomit. You should always have Children's Benadryl in your medicine cabinet just in case. Make sure you follow the one new food every 3-5 days' rule. All new foods should be tried with a parent and preferably not at daycare or restaurants.

Water, Cups, and Bottles:

Babies do not need any water until 4-6 months of age. At 4 months offer 2-4 oz./day. At 6 months, you can introduce water in a straw or sippy cup. You do not need to buy special water for the baby. Let them have as much or as little as they want. There is no amount the baby "should be" having. With a sippy cup, you will have to tip the cup up to suck the fluids out, much like a bottle. A straw cup is the closest to an adult like drinking cup, and doesn't allow the baby to spill everything. Your goal is to get them drinking out of a straw cup by 12 months of age. This is the time you should transition away from bottles all together and put milk in a cup. The longer you keep the bottle past a year, the harder they will be to discontinue. Babies should never sleep with the bottle in their mouth.

Juice:

Before the infant reaches six months of age, fruit juice provides no nutritional benefit. However, 100% fruit juice (as opposed to "fruit drinks") can be a part of a well-balanced meal for older children when consumed in limited quantities of no more than 4 oz. per day. It should not be sipped throughout the day. Full-strength juice can be used as an anti-constipating food for infants and children if hard stools and straining are evident.

Milk and Dairy:

One of the main reasons you should wait until after 1 year old to introduce milk as a formula/breastmilk replacement is that milk hinders the absorption of iron in the body. At 1 year of age you may introduce whole cow's milk into your baby's diet. Children need the extra milk fat in their diets until 2 years of age then its ok to move to 2%, 1% or skim milk. Milk in yogurt, cheeses, baked or cooked foods are safe for your baby after 6 months of age.