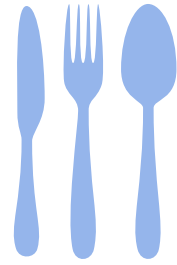


INTRODUCING



Solids

Introducing solids is an exciting time, but it can be confusing trying to determine when and how to start.

Solids are usually introduced between 4-6 months when your baby is able to control their head and neck. Each child is different, so speak with your child's PCP to determine the best time for your child to start.

How do I feed my baby?

- Start with half a spoonful or less. Your baby may not know what to do at first - they may look confused, wrinkle their nose, or roll the food around inside their mouth, or reject it altogether
- Don't be surprised if most of the first few solid-food feedings end up on your baby's face, hands, and bibs.
- Increase the amount of food gradually, with just a teaspoon or two to start. This allows your baby time to learn how to swallow solids.

Tips for Preparing Foods

- **4-6 Months:**
 - It is best to start by introducing soft and pureed foods
 - Mix cereals and mashed cooked grains with breast milk, formula, or water to make it smooth and easy for your baby to swallow.
 - Mash or puree vegetables, fruit, or other foods until they are smooth.
 - Hard fruits/vegetables, like apples or carrots, usually need to be cooked so they can be easily mashed with a fork or pureed.
 - Remove all fat, skin, and bones from poultry, meat, and fish, before cooking.
 - Remove seeds and hard pits from fruit, then cut the fruit into small pieces.
- **8-9 Months:**
 - Cut soft foods into small pieces or thin slices.
 - Cut cylindrical foods like hot dogs, sausage, and string cheese into short, thin strips instead of round pieces that could get stuck in the airway.
 - Cut small spherical foods like grapes, cherries, berries, and tomatoes into small pieces.
 - Cook and finely grind or mash whole-grain kernels of wheat, barley, rice, and other grains.

Which foods should I start with?

- Introduce one "single-ingredient" new food from any food group every 3-5 days. Look out for any reaction.
- Offer a variety of different foods. It may take several attempts of the same food before your baby accepts it.
- There is no evidence that your baby will develop a dislike for vegetables if fruit is given first.
- Be sure to include foods that provide iron and zinc, such as baby foods made with meat or iron-fortified cereal.



Safety Guidelines

- It is encouraged that parents and caregivers take a CPR class to learn basic pediatric CPR guidelines, as well as the Heimlich maneuver.
- Do not use your microwave to heat up your baby's food. It can become too hot.
- Be sure to secure your baby in the high chair with safety straps.
- If under 12 months of age, do not give honey due to the risk of botulism.
- Avoid choking hazards - examples include popcorn, whole grapes, uncut hotdog, string cheese, etc.
- Limit infant rice cereal due to the risk of your child being exposed to arsenic.



Introducing Potential Allergens

- Research shows that early introduction of potential food allergens lowers the child's risk of developing an allergy to that food.
- Potentially allergenic foods include:
 - Cow's milk products
 - Eggs
 - Fish and shellfish
 - Tree nuts
 - Peanuts
 - Wheat
 - Soy
 - Sesame



- Symptoms of a food allergy in an infant may include:
 - Hives or welts
 - Flushed skin or rash
 - Face, tongue, or lip swelling
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Coughing or wheezing
 - Difficulty breathing
- What should you do if you suspect an allergic reaction?
 - If mild symptoms (i.e., hives, flushed skin, etc.), contact your child's PCP.
 - If moderate to severe symptoms (i.e., tongue swelling, coughing, difficulty breathing, etc.), **call 911 immediately.**

Good Eating Habits Start Early

- Encourage family meals from the first feeding. Research shows that having dinner together, as a family, on a regular basis has positive effects on the development of children.
- Remember to offer a good variety of healthy foods that are rich in the nutrients your child needs. Watch your child for cues that they have had enough to eat. Do not overfeed!

What changes should I expect?

- When your baby starts eating solid foods, their stool will become more solid and variable in color. Because of the added sugars and fats, they will also have a much stronger odor.
- Peas and other green vegetables may turn the stool a deep-green color. Beets may make it red.
- Their stools may contain undigested pieces of food, such as corn, hulls of peas, and skin of tomatoes or other vegetables.
- All of the above changes are considered normal and there is no need for concern.
- If the stools become extremely loose, watery, or full of mucus, it may mean the digestive tract is irritated. Their digestive systems are still immature and need time before they can fully process new foods. In this case, reduce the amount of solids and introduce them more slowly.

Frequently Asked Questions

- When can I introduce peanut butter?
 - Peanut-containing products can be introduced as young as 4-6 months of age. Peanut butter can be a difficult texture for your child to eat. One tip for introducing peanut butter is to mix a small amount with food the baby has already tried (i.e., mashed sweet potatoes)
- Does my baby need water?
 - Healthy babies do not need additional water intake. Breast milk and/or formula provide all the fluid they need. It is okay to offer a small amount of water in a sippy cup when they start solids.
- Can I give my child juice?
 - Babies younger than 12 months should not be given juice. After 12 months of age, give only 100% fruit juice and no more than 4 ounces per day.

Helpful Resources

- For more information on introducing solids to your child, visit the following websites:
 - <https://solidstarts.com>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/foods-and-drinks/when-to-introduce-solid-foods.html>
 - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx>

