

Six to Seven Months

While you continue to give 4-5 feedings of breast milk or formula (24-32 ounces) you can now start to give well-cooked, strained, or pureed vegetables, fruits and meats or commercially prepared Stage 1 baby foods once or twice a day. Start with one tablespoon and you may increase to four tablespoons gradually. You can also begin to offer of tap water in a sippy or straw cup.

Eight to Nine Months

While you continue to give 3-4 feedings of breast milk or formula (24-32 ounces) you can now start to give up to 3 solid meals per day including meat, fish, cheese, whole fat yoghurt, beans, fruits and vegetables. You can also start to offer him soft table foods and finger foods (the size of your finger nail) at this age. Small soft pieces of fruit, cheese, puffs, well cooked vegetables and pasta are good initial choices.

Ten to Twelve Months

Your baby's diet will begin to resemble that of the rest of the family, with 3 meals and 2 snacks each day and will include 3-4 feedings of breast milk or formula (24-32 ounces),

Weaning

There is no set age at which you should wean your baby. The current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics are to continue to breast feed until your child is at least age one. You can gradually wean your child from breast feeding by stopping one feeding every four or five days and replacing this with a bottle. If you wean before the age of one, you should introduce your infant to formula and not cow's milk.

Twelve Months & Beyond

You may now give your baby homogenized whole cow's milk. Do not use low-fat milk until your child is 2 years old as fat is necessary for brain development. Your child should now want to feed him/herself with his/her fingers and should progress eventually to using a spoon or fork as well as drinking from a cup. The next few months will be a time to move away from the bottle.

Encourage your child to try new foods and do not hesitate to offer foods again even if previously disliked. Sit down to family meals whenever possible, research supports the many benefits of doing so.

Because children often swallow without chewing, do not offer children younger than 4 years of age the following foods: chunks of peanut butter, nuts and seeds, popcorn, raw vegetables, hard, gooey or sticky candy, raisins, chewing gum, other firm, round foods like grapes, cooked carrots, hot dogs, meat sticks (baby food "hot dogs") Chunks of cheese or meat always should be cut into very small pieces. Before cutting a hot dog, remove the slippery peel.

Avoid juice, sweet desserts, soft drinks/sodas, fruit-flavored drinks, sugar-coated cereals, chips and candy, as they have little nutritional value.

Practice responsive feeding. Stop when your child is full and do not worry if they skip a meal here or there.

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A Guide to Starting Solids

Introducing your baby to solid foods will provide you with an excellent opportunity to teach him or her lifelong healthy eating habits. Here are some general guidelines that will put your baby on the right track to healthy eating.

Breast milk or infant formula supplies all of your baby's nutritional needs for at least the first 4 to 6 months of life; it is not necessary to be in a rush to start solid baby foods.

Research suggests that introduction of solids before this time is associated with increased weight gain and obesity. Contrary to popular belief, early introduction of solids has NOT been shown to help babies sleep through the night.

Most infants are ready to start solid foods between the ages of 4 and 6 months and when he or she has good head control while seated, opens his/her mouth when food is brought near, reaches for your food or imitates your chewing motions and moves food from the spoon to the back of the throat.

How to Begin Solids

Seat your baby in a car seat or in a highchair. He/she should be in a slightly reclined position and able to keep the head up.

Use a baby spoon with a soft coating and avoid putting solids into your baby's bottle. Chose a time that works best for you and your baby, making sure that he/she is not too tired, hungry or full.

One meal a day is plenty at first. Start with half a tablespoon. Don't be surprised if you get a confused look, a tongue thrust or outright rejection from your baby. And do not worry if most of the cereal ends up on the baby's face, bib and chair.

Remember, that this is a gradual process and that **breast milk and/or formula is your baby's PRIMARY SOURCE of nutrition**. If after 3 or 4 days, your baby is still not interested or unable to eat solids, take a break and try again in a couple of weeks. He/she may just not be ready yet.

What solids to begin with

For most babies it does NOT matter which solids you chose to start with as there is NO medical evidence that introducing solids in any particular order has an advantage for your baby.

Initially, introduce one new food at a time and wait 2 days before introducing 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 call us.

If your baby drinks mostly breastmilk he/she may benefit from starting with iron rich foods such as iron fortified cereals or meats. Iron fortified cereals are available in several forms, however, we recommend starting with a dry, single grain, cereal such

as oatmeal or barley. Rice cereal may also be used but for a few babies it may cause some constipation.

Mix the cereal with breastmilk or formula to make a thickened liquid that you can feed with a spoon.

Increasing solids

Once your baby has mastered the first foods, gradually introduce others. Expose your baby to a wide variety of healthy foods and textures, beginning with purees and working up in consistency. Remember that it may take your baby several tries before accepting certain foods.

There is NO single right way to structure solid feedings. Start by giving your baby solids once a day, working up to twice or even three times a day and offering breast milk or formula in between.

If he or she is showing hunger cues often during the day, you'll want to start offering an extra solid meal. But if he wants only a few tablespoons at the first sitting and doesn't seem interested in eating much more at the next feeding, don't force the issue.

Finger Foods

Finger foods can be introduced once your baby is sitting unassisted, using a pincer grasp and is enjoying a wide variety of tastes and textures. To avoid choking, make sure anything you give your baby is soft, easy to swallow, and cut into small pieces, for example:

- small pieces of banana and avocado
- small pieces of soft cheese
- puffs or Cheerios®
- scrambled eggs
- well-cooked pasta
- well-cooked finely chopped chicken
- well-cooked and cut up vegetables

Water

Introduce your baby to the taste of tap water in a sippy cup or straw cup after you have started solids. Do not mix water with juice or other sweeteners. Start with 1-2 ounces a day and work up as desired by your baby. NYC tap water is fluorinated, which means in addition to maintaining your baby's hydration; it will also keep his/her teeth healthy.

Do not give your baby in the first year

- honey
- cow's milk to drink IN PLACE of formula or breastmilk (however, cheese and yogurt may be fed)

Research is changing regarding allergenic foods such as peanuts, nuts, and eggs. For many infants these foods can be introduced safely after nine months, unless otherwise advised.

