



HOW DO WE INTRODUCE SOLIDS TO OUR BABY?

Basically, you may start all foods in a smooth purée form except honey at 4 months of age. No honey until 12 months. Giving only one food every few days is no longer recommended for children with no food allergies.

Most babies eat foods best at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Eating from a spoon is a much less efficient process than drinking milk, so purées should be offered when your baby is just starting to get a little hungry and when they're not overtired. Purées should be offered first, then offer breast or bottle after the feeding if they are still hungry. After 6 months of age, you may introduce a little water in a cup with feedings to help prevent constipation.

Offer a small amount at first - it's typical that your baby will only take 1-2 oz of a pureed food at first. Infants may refuse a new food many, many times. If you continue to offer these refused foods, they will almost always take them eventually. Don't force, just offer.

Iron is really important for breast fed babies. Formula is iron-fortified. Breast milk contains very little iron, and breast fed babies have used up most of their iron stores by the time solids are introduced. An iron-rich food should be offered daily from early on to prevent iron-deficiency anemia. The easiest form of iron to absorb comes from meats (especially red meat) and fish, so many pediatricians recommend starting with meat for a week before introducing other foods. Vegetarian sources of iron include beans, dark leafy greens and prunes. Iron-fortified cereals are another way to provide iron for your breast fed baby.

Since 2008, the American Academy of Pediatrics Allergy and Gastroenterology-Nutrition recommendations are to start all foods except honey at four months. **Waiting to introduce highly allergenic foods such as nut butters, fish, seafood and egg has been shown to *increase* the risk of allergies to those foods.**

Start all foods, including various proteins, all vegetables and fruits. Cereals should also be offered to reduce the incidence of allergies to oats, barley, wheat or rice. However, these need to be given only infrequently. **Proteins** include nut butters, which can be stirred into other foods in small amounts, meats, fish, seafood, tofu and egg. **Start with baked egg before cooked egg.** Baked egg, such as egg noodles, egg bread or other baked products with egg may reduce the risk of egg allergy if offered first. Therefore, we suggest starting with baked egg products for the first few weeks, followed by hard-boiled egg. Later, try well-cooked scrambled egg. Raw egg may risk serious allergic reactions, so no soft-boiled or over-easy eggs until your child is older.

What about a child at high risk of food allergies? If your child has severe eczema or known allergy to foods, there are some modifications that need to be considered. Children with food allergies or severe eczema need some special considerations, depending on what allergies they have. These should be discussed at the 4-month visit. Some will require referral to an allergist.

When do we introduce non-puréed foods?

Most infants will take finger foods by 7-9 months of age. These include soft foods, like small bits of peach, sweet potato, avocado, banana. These should be cut into bits that are less than ¼ inch in size. When these are well-tolerated, you may start offering bits of Cheerios, and finally, small pieces of grated cheese, scrambled egg, and small bits of finely shredded meats. If your child is gagging with these foods, keep trying small bits of soft food every few weeks until your baby can tolerate the texture. Be aware that babies without molars cannot grind food, so skins of fruits and vegetables can be difficult.