

Introducing Solids

There is a range of times that babies show readiness to start solids and progress to increased textures and finger foods. If your baby was born premature, use their adjusted age and assess their readiness based on their developmental age.

When to Start

- Babies are ready to begin solids somewhere between 4-6 months of age. They should have doubled their birth weight before you introduce solids. Signs of readiness include the ability to:
 - sit upright with or without support.
 - keep their head and neck steady for 10-15 minutes.
 - open their mouth when presented with food.
 - hold food in their mouth and swallow.

How to Introduce Solids

- Introduce one new food at a time to check for food allergies.
- To be on the safe side wait 3 days before introducing another food.
- Begin with small amounts.
- Start with pureed food and gradually increase to a lumpier texture.
- Start with 1-3 tsp of solids and gradually increase until your child's rate of feeding slows down or they refuse anymore.
Once each new food group is introduced, provide a variety of fruits, vegetables, and protein foods.

First Foods.

Vegetables

- Introduce cooked pureed or mashed vegetable one at a time.
- Begin with mild tasting single vegetables such as squash, peas, carrots, sweet potatoes, green or yellow beans.
- Once the single vegetables have been introduced and are tolerated well, move on to mixed vegetables.

Fruits: delaying fruit until after you have introduced some vegetables allows your baby to get used to wholesome vegetables and grains before being exposed to the sweet taste of fruits.

- Introduce pureed or mashed fruits one at a time.
- Provide only pure fruit (with no added sugar)
- Introduce juice at 5-6 months of age; limit to only 4 ounces per day. You may dilute the juice 50/50 with water if you want it is not necessary. Offer juice in a cup.

Meats and Alternatives

- May be introduced when baby is over 6 months of age. Start with 1 tsp of meat alone.
- Introduce fully cooked pureed, minced, or finely chopped meat one at a time.
- Meat alternatives: fully cooked egg yolks, legumes such as cooked mashed kidney beans, black beans, lentils, or chickpeas.
- Cottage cheese, shredded cheese and yogurt may be offered after meats have been introduced.

Table Foods and Finger Foods (between 7-9 months)

- Your child is ready for table foods and finger foods when he can handle thicker baby foods and is showing up and down chewing motions of the jaw, and he can use a pincer-like grasp to pick up small objects.
- If introduction of lumpier foods is started too late, baby may refuse textured foods.
- Introduce new textures slowly and start with small amounts. Introduce lumpier foods without added sugar, fat or salt and then progress to table and finger foods.
- Examples of table & finger foods include:
 - cooked veggies: carrot or sweet potato chunks, broccoli, or cauliflower heads, & asparagus tips
 - soft ripe fruits: banana, melon, canned fruits packed in their own juice, avocado.
 - dry cereal
 - bread, bagels, melba toast, toast, wheat crackers, unsalted pretzels, and graham crackers.
 - well-cooked pasta shells & spirals
 - pieces of well-cooked meat, chicken, white fish, tofu, cooked beans, lentils, soy burger and cheese

Foods that may cause choking:

- Hot dogs, peanuts, nuts, grapes, cherry tomatoes, raw carrots, raisins, seeds, candy, popcorn, potato or tortilla chips, peanut butter in a large glob.
- To minimize the risk of choking always cut round foods like grapes, hot dogs or cherry tomatoes into quarters before offering to an infant or younger child.

Safety:

- Do not feed baby directly from jar as this may cause bacteria to grow in the remaining food.
- Opened jars of commercial baby food may be kept covered in the refrigerator for up to 3 days; meat should be used within 48 hours. Homemade baby food can be kept in the refrigerator for 2 days or frozen in the freezer for up to 1 month.
- Always supervise infants when eating.
- To prevent early childhood dental caries, never put baby to sleep with a bottle. Wipe or brush baby's teeth at night and in the morning.

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