



Introducing Solids

Up until 6 months of age, your baby needs only breast milk or formula milk. After which, you will need to start introducing complementary solid foods to meet the changing nutritional needs of your growing baby. Complementary foods refer to foods introduced during the transition from full milk feeds to family foods.

Why introduce solid foods?

- Provide opportunities for your child to swallow thicker textures, which helps him to develop the muscles for speech development.
- Nutrients solely from milk may not be sufficient for adequate growth.
- Develop social skills during mealtimes.
- Develop independence when children start to self-feed.

When should we start?

The World Health Organization recommends that babies should start receiving complementary foods after 6 months of age. Late introduction may deplete your baby's body stores of iron and other nutrients required for growth. The best cue is determined by your baby's developmental readiness.

If your baby displays the following signs, he may be ready.

- Able to hold head up and maintain a steady upright position, which is important for spoon-feeding.
- Sits well when supported.
- Makes chewing motions and is able to move food to the back of his mouth and swallow.
- Cries for feeds before his usual milk feeds. This is a sign of hunger, indicating that he needs more than just milk to satisfy him.
- Disappearance of the tongue's thrust extrusion reflex (i.e. the forward and upward movement). If still present, he will push food out when it is placed in his mouth. This means he is not ready for spoon-feeding; it is not food rejection. This reflex will gradually disappear with practice.
- Interest in food, perhaps eyeing your meals or reaching for food from the dining table.
- Dribbles and increased frequency of putting things into mouth.

Getting started

- Choose a time when your baby is not too tired or hungry. You can offer the food after your baby has completed a milk feed. You can also feed your baby a little milk to satisfy his hunger first before offering the food.
- Make sure your child is seated nearly upright. Provide a chair with adequate head and body support.
- If you are bottle feeding, do not add any foods (including cereals and rusks) to the milk. Offer foods using a small shallow baby spoon with a long handle and soft rubber tip.
- Present the spoon straight when inserting and removing it out from your child's mouth. Avoid scraping food off your child's teeth or gums when spoon-feeding. Allow your child to close his lips on the spoon to remove the food off the spoon himself.

- Wait for your baby to open his mouth when the food is offered. Do not force feed your baby. If your baby does not seem keen to eat, wait and try again later or on another day.
- Some babies take time to learn to eat new foods. It can take up to 15 or more exposures for a baby to try a new food. Persevere and be patient. Offer the new food again 2 – 3 times in the same week.
- Avoid adding fats such as butter or oil unless medically indicated by your doctor or dietitian.
- Only 1 new food should be introduced at a time; wait 3 – 4 days and then introduce another food, while looking out for any symptoms of intolerance or allergies.

Symptoms of food allergies

In general, symptoms may occur within several hours or days after eating the food. It is best to observe your baby's reaction(s) closely, especially after introducing a new food.

Common symptoms that occur within several hours	Relatively rare but serious symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hives, worsening eczema • Swollen eyes, tongue, face, mouth and lips • Watery stools • Vomiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in breathing • Fainting

Some babies may have an allergic reaction 1 or 2 days later (e.g. eczema, wheezing, persistent vomiting, constipation, stomach pain). Do keep a lookout and visit your doctor immediately if your baby displays any of these reactions.

What to start?

AROUND 6 MONTHS



7 MONTHS

9 MONTHS

Do not add salt, sugar or honey, as babies do not have an acquired taste for seasoned food at this age and you should not encourage the development of a sweet tooth. Seasoning should be avoided before 2 years of age. Honey should not be consumed by babies below 1 year old as they may develop a severe illness called botulism.



How often?

You can begin by feeding your child once a day, in between his milk feeds, when your child is most alert. After a week or two, you can increase the frequency to 2 times a day. As your child grows, he should start taking foods with increased texture and complexity. This helps in developing oral motor function and sensory processing, which are essential skills for eating.

Other liquids

It is important to continue feeding milk to your baby. As your baby starts to eat more semi-solid foods, you can gradually reduce the number of milk feeds a day. As a general guide, once your baby is able to have a full meal, you can skip one milk feed.

Offer liquids apart from milk to your baby once you have started semi-solid foods in his diet. You can give him cooled boiled water. Avoid giving bottled mineral water to your baby as it may contain high levels of some minerals.

Note that fruit drinks, juices and some baby drinks can contain large amounts of sugar, which may cause dental cavities and may lead to your baby developing a preference for sweet foods. Therefore, they are not encouraged.

Safety Tips	Hygiene Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your baby must always be supervised when eating.• Always feed your baby sitting in the correct posture.• Feed suitable textures and consistencies according to your baby's capabilities.• Avoid hard or big pieces of food to prevent choking, e.g. whole nuts or grapes.• Do not give raw honey to your infant (before he turns 1 year old), as it may contain bacteria spores, which can cause botulism - a serious illness.• When reheating foods, always bring to full boil, then cool. If reheating using a microwave oven, stir the food well and test the temperature on the back of your hand before feeding to avoid scalding your baby's mouth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Always wash your hands before handling your baby's food.• Separate raw and cooked foods.• Cook meat thoroughly.• Cover foods before keeping in the refrigerator.• Discard food that is unfinished from your baby's bowl.• In general, a small thermal flask cannot store food at a safe temperature (60°C or above) for a long period. To reduce the risk of bacterial growth, food stored in a thermal flask should be eaten within 2 hours after it is cooked.• If you are preparing a few meals at a time, set aside some portion of it and keep the remainder. Similarly, if you wish to give baby jar food, and your baby is unlikely to finish the whole jar, portion out the amount he can consume and store the remainder.

Source: KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Health Promotion Board

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