

HEALTHY EATING for Babies



Guidelines for Starting Solid Foods

STARTING SOLID FOODS

At around 6 months old your baby may be ready to start eating solid foods. Your baby is ready for solid foods when he or she:

- Has good head control
- Can sit without support
- Shows interest in food by opening his or her mouth
- Swallows without gagging

When you add solid foods to your baby's diet, keep breastfeeding until at least 12 months old.

When should I feed my baby?

Follow a routine each day. Start with feeding solids once a day, then 2 to 3 times a day. Feed your baby at the table during family meals. You can offer small snacks between meals.

How should I feed my baby?

Using a baby spoon, offer a spoonful of one new food at a time. Good first foods:

- Iron-fortified single-grain baby cereal mixed with breast milk
- Pureed fruits or vegetables
- Pureed meat, such as chicken, turkey, or beef



Give your baby one new food at a time, and wait at least 2 to 3 days before starting another. After each new food, watch for allergic reactions such as:

- Skin rash
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Trouble breathing

If you have a strong family history of food allergy, or your baby has had eczema, check with your child's doctor for specific advice.



NEW ADVICE ON ALLERGIES

For many years, experts thought the best way to prevent a peanut allergy was to avoid peanut products in the first years of life. Recent data has shown that giving peanut products early in life **lowers** the risk of developing a peanut allergy.

After a couple weeks of trying a few foods such as baby cereal or pureed fruit, vegetables, or meat without problems, you can start to offer foods that sometimes cause allergies. These include:

- Peanut products
- Yogurt
- Eggs
- Soy
- Wheat
- Fish
- Shellfish

You can mix a tiny amount of peanut butter or peanut flour into baby cereal, or offer a small amount of whole-milk yogurt or cooked egg yolk. **Do not give whole peanuts or any foods that need to be chewed at this stage.** Wait a few days before trying another new food.

Tips for feeding your baby

- Use an infant seat or high chair for feeding.
- Use a small spoon. Do not put cereal or other solids in a bottle. This can cause choking.
- Touch the spoon to your baby's lips. Let your baby suck the food from the spoon.
- Your baby may push the food back out at first. This does not mean that he or she doesn't like it. Keep trying and your baby will soon learn to swallow.
- **Do not force your baby to eat.** If your baby cries or turns away, stop the feeding. Watch for signs that your baby is full. Be careful not to overfeed your baby.
- Start offering water in a cup at 6 months old.

Within a few months of starting solid foods, your baby should be eating a variety of pureed and soft foods each day, such as:

- Breast milk
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Meats (chicken, turkey, beef)
- Whole grains
- Baby cereal
- Eggs
- Fish
- Beans and lentils
- Tofu
- Nut butters



Making baby food at home

- You may use a baby food grinder, blender, or food processor to make baby foods. Except for bananas and avocados, most fruits and vegetables should be cooked before blending. Store extra pureed foods in the freezer.
- Keep foods plain. Don't add sugar, salt, or honey to your baby's food. After a few months, you can add spices and herbs without salt to your baby's food.

Buying baby food

- Buy single-ingredient foods at first. Avoid combination meals.
- Offer your baby mashed fresh fruit instead of baby desserts such as puddings, custards, or cobblers.

FOODS TO AVOID

Foods to avoid during the first year

- **Honey can make your baby sick.**
- Corn syrup, sugar, salt, fast food, soy milk, and cow's milk. (Plain whole-milk yogurt and cheese are OK.)
- Juice drinks, soda, gelatin, sugar water, and even 100% juice. These may hurt your baby's teeth.

Foods that can cause choking

Always watch your baby closely when he or she is eating. **Do not give your baby these foods:**

- Hot dogs
- Nuts and seeds
- Chunks of peanut butter
- Chunks of raw vegetables
- Chunks of meat or cheese
- Whole grapes
- Candy
- Popcorn
- Chewing gum



SAMPLE MENUS

Let your baby decide how much to eat. Spoon out a small amount into a dish first. You can offer part of a meal later as a snack. Be patient as your baby learns how to eat. Let your baby's appetite guide how much healthy food he or she has.

6 TO 8 MONTHS OLD

Breakfast

- 1–2 tablespoons infant oat cereal
- 1–2 tablespoons pureed squash

Lunch

- 1–2 tablespoons pureed peas

Dinner

- 1–2 tablespoons pureed chicken
- 1–2 tablespoons pureed pears

On Demand

- Breast milk

9 TO 12 MONTHS OLD

Breakfast

- 2–3 tablespoons infant rice cereal
- 2–3 tablespoons bite sized, soft-cooked carrots

Lunch

- 2–3 tablespoons mashed or chopped turkey
- 2–3 tablespoons mashed cauliflower
- 2–3 tablespoons well-cooked whole-wheat pasta

Dinner

- 2–3 tablespoons mashed or chopped chicken
- 2–3 tablespoons mashed green beans
- 2–3 tablespoons mashed sweet potato
- 2–3 tablespoons mashed peaches

On Demand

- Breast milk



