

Introducing Solid Foods

Your baby is ready for strained/pureed foods when s/he can do **all** of these things:

- Hold head up and sit with support in an infant seat or high chair.
- Put fingers and toys in mouth.
- Show interest in food and opens mouth when s/he sees food.
- Close lips over spoon and does not push spoon out with tongue.
- Keep food in mouth and swallow (some dribbling early on is normal).
- Can turn his/her head and mouth away to stop feeding.

Some guidelines:

- Every baby will advance with feedings at their own rate. Don't worry if s/he refuses a meal. Avoid making your child clean the plate.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting until your child is 6 months of age before introducing solids.
- Once your baby learns to eat one food, wait at least 3 days before trying a different food. This gives you time to notice any allergic reactions such as rashes, diarrhea, or vomiting.
***If your family has food allergies or your baby was born early, talk to your doctor before adding solid foods to your baby's diet.**
- Baby cereal has been the most common 1st food, but experts agree that foods may be started in any order. Babies who are mainly breast fed will get more of the iron and zinc they need if their 1st food is baby meat.
- Avoid putting baby cereal in a bottle unless directed to do so by your child's doctor because of reflux.
- Start with a teaspoon and slowly work up to a tablespoon.

<http://www.healthychildren.org> is sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics and is an excellent source of information. **This is a general timetable for introducing solid foods into your baby's diet**

| Age | Food Items | Daily Amounts | Comments |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Birth to 6 months | Breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula | 8-12 feedings per day | Your baby is not ready for solid foods yet |
| 4-6 months | Breast milk and/or iron fortified formula | 4-6 feedings per day or 28-32 ounces | |
| | Iron-fortified cereal (Most common first food for formula fed infants) | 2-4 tablespoons | You may start with plain rice, oat or barley cereal mixed with breast milk or formula. Remember to give a single grain cereal. |

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| | Meats First food for breast milk fed infants [American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation for more iron and zinc] | 1-2 tablespoons | Use plain, strained, pureed or baby meats. Do not use “dinners” as they contain multiple ingredients, and avoid meats high in nitrate and salt such as wieners, luncheon meats and bacon. |
| | Fruits and Vegetables | 1-2 tablespoons of vegetables or fruits | Pureed, plain fruits and vegetables Do not offer juice unless told to do so by your doctor. |
| 6 to 8 months | Breast milk and/or formula | 3-5 feedings or 30—32oz of formula | You may start offering some breast milk or formula in a cup. Offer the cup to your baby with all meals by 8 months. |
| | Vegetables | 2-3 tablespoons | Offer pureed vegetables with some soft, cooked, small pieces of vegetables mashed up with a fork or as finger food. |
| | Fruits | 2-3 tablespoons | Offer different kinds of pureed fresh fruits. Avoid “desserts” and juice. |
| | Meats, egg, beans | 1-2 tablespoons | Meats may have already been introduced if your baby was breast fed. |
| | Iron-fortified cereals or enriched hot cereals | 4-6 tablespoons | Offer rice, oat, barley and wheat cereals to provide variety in flavor and texture. |
| | Toast, crackers, dry cereal | varies | Iron-fortified, unsweetened cereals may be used as finger foods 1-2 times per day. Small pieces of toast or crackers may be given. |

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| 9 to 12 months | Breast milk or formula | 4-5 feedings or about 22-32 oz formula | Continue giving a cup at all meals. |
| | Meats, eggs, beans, tofu, dairy (cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese) | 1/4-1/2 cup with each meal | Make sure meats are soft and cut into small pieces. Do not offer large chunks. |
| | Fruits | 1/4-1/2 cup at 2 meals | Offer fruits that require some chewing if your baby chews on cereal or crackers well. Offer more finger foods and less mashed food. Avoid fruit snacks. |
| | Vegetables | 1/4-1/2 cup at 2 meals | See above |

*According to the American Academy of Pediatrics there is no evidence that waiting to start soft foods like peanut butter, eggs, dairy, soy and/or fish prevents a food allergy. HOWEVER, if you have a strong family history of food allergies, talk to your child's doctor before introducing these foods. Avoid giving cow's milk to drink in place of formula or breast milk until 1 year of age as it is not a complete source of nutrition. It is fine, however, to offer full fat yogurt, cottage cheese, or small pieces of cheese as long as there are no food allergies.

Fun Tips

Do:

- Make sure your hands and all bowls, spoons and the high chair are clean.
- Spoon the amount of food you think your baby will eat from the baby food container into a bowl. The original container may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. After 2 days it needs to be thrown away. If you feed your baby from the baby food container, any food that is left after the feeding is done must be thrown away. Dipping your baby's spoon back in the jar after it has been in your baby's mouth will cause bacteria to grow and make it unsafe for your baby to eat.
- Meal times will be messy. Relax and have fun! Throw an old tablecloth under the highchair to help with clean up.
- Let your baby touch and handle food. Keep a clean rag ready.
- If your baby does not like a food, offer it again at a different meal. It may take many times of trying a food before your baby decides if s/he wants to eat.

Do Not:

- Heat food or formula in the microwave because hot spots in the food or formula can burn your baby's mouth.
- Use honey. Honey may contain bacterial spores which can cause infant botulism and make your baby sick.
- Give your baby sweetened drinks like Kool-Aid, soda pop, punch or juice.
- Put your baby to bed with a bottle. This leads to tooth decay.
- Feed your baby foods that are high in nitrates/nitrites (beets, turnips, collard greens or spinach). These foods can make babies less than 6 months of age sick. (The level of nitrates/nitrites in commercial baby food is checked for safety so this rule only applies to homemade baby food). Older babies can handle these foods.

If you would like information on making your own baby food, ask a Registered Dietitian.

Suggestions for finger foods:

- Cooked macaroni
- Graham crackers
- Dry toast pieces
- Small pieces of soft, well cooked vegetables
- Dry cereal
- Bread sticks
- Arrowroot cookies
- Soft, peeled diced fruit
- Mandarin orange sections
- Small pieces of mild cheese

Avoid foods that cause choking:

- Nuts, Seeds
- Popcorn
- Chips/pretzels
- Crunchy, thick peanut butter
- Hot dogs
- Grapes
- Raw vegetables
- Raisins/dried fruit
- Candy
- Hard Candy
- Gum

Teach Back:

What is the most important thing you learned from this handout?

What changes will you make in your diet/lifestyle, based on what you learned today?

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500.**

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2017 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#207