

## Introducing Solid Foods

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests waiting until your child is 6 months of age before introducing solids. Your baby is ready for strained/pureed foods when able to do **all** of these things:

- Hold head up and sit with support in an infant seat or highchair.
- Put fingers and toys in mouth.
- Show interest in food and opens mouth when they see 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 head and mouth away to stop feeding.

Every baby will advance with feedings at their own rate. Don't worry if your baby refuses a meal. Avoid making your child clean the plate.

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 first food, but experts agree that foods may be started in any order. Babies who are mainly breastfed will get more of the iron and zinc they need if their first food is baby meat.

Avoid putting baby cereal in a bottle unless told to do so by your child's doctor.

### 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

- 2-4 tablespoons
- Start with plain rice, oat or barley cereal mixed with breast milk or formula
- Use a single grain cereal

#### Meats

- 1-2 tablespoons
- Use plain, strained, pureed or baby meats, not "dinners" as they contain many ingredients
- Avoid meats high in nitrate and salt such as wieners, luncheon meats and bacon

#### Fruits and Vegetables

- 1-2 tablespoons of vegetables or fruits
- Use 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 Iron-Fortified

#### Formula

- 3-5 feedings or 30-32oz of formula
- Offer some breast milk or formula in a cup and 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
- Offer mashed boiled or scrambled eggs and mashed beans

#### 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

- Amount varies
- Iron-fortified, unsweetened cereals may be used as finger foods 1-2 times per day
- Small pieces of toast or crackers

## 9 to 12 Months

### Breast Milk or Formula

- 4-5 feedings or about 22-32 oz formula
- Keep 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, no 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

### Allergies

There is no evidence that waiting to start soft foods like peanut butter, eggs, dairy, soy and/or fish prevents a food allergy. But, if you have a strong family history of food allergies, talk to your child’s doctor before starting these foods. Avoid giving cow’s milk to drink in place of formula or breast milk until 1 year of age. You can offer full fat yogurt, cottage cheese, or small pieces of cheese if there are no food allergies.

### Tips

Make sure your hands and all bowls, spoons and the highchair are clean.

Spoon the amount of food you think your baby will eat from the baby food container into a bowl. You can store the original

container in the fridge for up to 2 days. After 2 days, throw it away. If you feed your baby from the baby food container, any food that is left, 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.

Mealtimes 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 to eat it.

### **Feeding Safety**

Don't heat food or formula in the microwave because hot spots in the food or formula can burn your baby's mouth.

Don't feed your baby honey. Honey may contain bacterial spores which can make your baby sick.

Don't give your baby sweetened drinks like Kool-Aid, soda, punch or juice.

Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle. This leads to tooth decay.

Don't feed your baby foods high in nitrates/nitrites (beets, turnips, collard greens or spinach). These foods can make babies less than 6 months of age sick. (Store-bought baby food is checked for safety so this rule only applies to homemade baby food). Older babies can handle these foods.

You do not have to use store-bought baby food. You can blend your own baby food at home. Wash all fruits and vegetables and cook animal products well. If you want to learn more about making your own baby food, ask a registered dietitian.

### **Safe 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

### **To Find Out More**

<http://www.healthychildren.org>

This site is sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics and is a good resource. This is a general timetable for introducing solid foods.

## **Who to Call**

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](http://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.**

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 12/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#207