

Introducing Solids

The introduction of solids is an important stage in your baby's development, and can be both an exciting and challenging time for you and your baby. The following information should be used as a guide only. Remember that each infant moves through the stages of development at different rates.

When should your baby start solids?

Most infants are ready to start solids around 6 months of age. Until this time, your baby's growth and development needs are met by breast milk or formula alone. By 6 months of age your baby's iron stores are decreasing and transition to solids is required for adequate nutrition. Breast milk or formula continues to be an important part of the diet up until at least 12 months of age.

What are some of the signs indicating my baby is ready for solids?

- Ability to hold up head and sit independently
- Wanting to put things in their mouth
- Interest in food eaten by others
- Reaching out for food and cutlery
- Leaning forward when around food
- Opening mouth when food is offered

How do I start introducing solids?

- Choose a time after a feed when both you and your baby are relaxed.
- Make sure your baby is sitting comfortably and is not too hungry.
- Start with a single food and offer a very small amount on a small infant teaspoon
- Have your baby sit with the family at mealtimes to watch and learn.
- Continue to try foods your baby may have previously refused, and try not to feel anxious or rejected. You may need to offer new foods up to 10 times!
- Don't worry if your baby makes a mess – this is a new experience.

What food should I offer first?

- Start with an iron-fortified cereal or iron-rich food such as pureed meat, tofu or legumes.
- Next add different types of pureed vegetables, fruit and other foods from the Five Food Groups. Food can be introduced in any order provided iron-rich foods are included.
- At the start your baby may only eat small amounts and breast milk or formula will be the main food.
- Respond to your baby's cues to know how much food to give them.
- Gradually vary the texture from puree, to mashed and then minced, as your baby gets older. Aim for your baby to be eating family foods by around 12 months of age.

Commercial Baby Food

Commercial baby food in jars and squeeze packs can be convenient, especially while out and about. However, these products should ideally be used in conjunction with home-cooked meals as they become quite expensive, the texture is often too fine and the different flavours are all mixed together. It is important that your baby learns to eat and enjoy a variety of coarser textures and individual flavours.

What foods should my baby avoid under the age of 12 months?

- Unpasteurised honey and raw eggs due to the potential risk of bacterial infection.
- Added sugar and salt.
- Tea and coffee as they contain compounds that can interfere with vitamin absorption.
- Small, round, hard or sticky foods such as nuts, lollies, popcorn and hard pieces of raw vegetables and fruit as they can be a choking risk in children under 3 years of age. Hard fruits and vegetables can be grated, mashed or cooked.
- Fruit juice and other sweet drinks as they can lead to dental decay and interfere with the amount of breast milk or formula consumed. Water is a better option from 6 months if your baby is thirsty.

When can I start giving my baby cow’s milk?

Breast milk or an appropriate infant formula should remain the main source of milk until 12 months of age, although cow’s milk can be used in cooking or with other foods. Reduced and low fat milk are not recommended for children under two years of age.

What if my family has a history of food allergies?

There is insufficient evidence to support previous advice to specifically delay or avoid potentially allergenic foods (such as eggs, peanuts, nuts, wheat, cow’s milk, fish) for the prevention of food allergy or eczema.

Name and Phone: