

Introducing Solid Foods



When should I start giving my baby solid foods?

- Breastfeeding is a complete source of nutrition for the first 6 months of life. Our practice recommends exclusive breastfeeding for as long as possible during the first year of life. Many parents introduce formula feedings in the early months as well. Introducing pureed baby food helps babies to learn to enjoy new tastes and textures and is fun!
- Between **4 and 6 months** most babies are ready to start solids. We do not recommend starting prior to age 4 months. Signs they are ready include:
 - Holding their head up without wobbling
 - Opening their mouth for a spoon
 - Seeming interested in what you are eating
 - Disappearance of prominent “tongue thrust” reflex (pushing food out of their mouth with their tongue)
- When these milestones occur and parents feel ready, it is time to start solid foods.
- Always take your time and follow your baby’s cues. If your baby is interested and enjoying the experience, keep going. If not, wait a week or so and try again. There is no rush.

What foods should I introduce first and what is the schedule?

- There are many opinions about which foods to introduce first. The most important concept is to start with a **single ingredient food and wait a few days in between new foods** to make sure your baby doesn’t have an allergic reaction. *Allergic reactions* can include vomiting, frequent diarrhea, blood in stools, hives or other rash. If you suspect an allergic reaction, discontinue the food and call our office.
- We encourage a diet rich in **fruits and vegetables**, so this is a good place to start. Babies also need an additional source of iron in the diet, so enriched cereals and pureed meats are good to introduce as well. If you are vegetarian or prefer not to introduce meats or cereal, consider adding a multivitamin with iron such as Poly Vi Sol with Iron, 1 ml dropperful each day, especially if you are breast feeding. Breast milk has a small amount of iron that is very well absorbed, but without an additional source of iron, many babies become anemic.
- Begin by trying a few spoonfuls of a food. As your baby gets the hang of it, work up to 3 meals a day including a fruit or vegetable and a source of iron at each feeding. You can offer the food at a meal time and include breast milk or formula before or after the pureed foods, whichever your baby prefers.
- You can make your own baby food or buy the prepared ones, whichever you prefer. Stage 1 foods are a thin, smooth puree with single ingredients. Stage 2 foods are still a smooth puree, but are a little thicker, with a combination of ingredients. Stage 3 foods contain a chunk and smooth component. Most babies prefer self-feeding with table foods when they are ready for a chunky food.

When can I start finger foods?

- You can start finger foods once your baby is **sitting up on their own and can bring objects to their mouths**.
- Give foods that are soft, well cooked, easily swallowed, and cut in small pieces. Some examples are: bananas, scrambled eggs, peas, and finely shredded chicken.

What is baby led weaning?

- Baby led weaning is a feeding technique where an infant skips eating purees and begins with finger foods when first starting to eat solids.
- It is important to make sure your baby is developmentally ready for finger foods, if you feel this feeding technique is best for your family. Your baby should be able to sit up and bring their hands or objects to their mouth, this is typically around the age of 6 months.

Are there any foods I should avoid?

- **Honey and cows milk** should be avoided until your baby turns 1 years old
- **Hard foods** your baby could choke on such as raw vegetables or large chunks of meat
- **Round foods** should be cut in half or quarters such as grapes to avoid choking
- It is **OK** to give eggs, dairy, soy, peanut products, or fish. In the past, it was recommended to delay introduction of common allergenic foods. However, updated research has proven this is not necessary and can actually increase rates of food allergies.

Can I give my baby water?

- Once your baby is **6 months old** you can offer water at meals in a sippy cup. They get enough water in their milk but this is practice for when they will eventually wean from the bottle.
- They do not need more than 8 oz of water a day. Excessive water intake can alter electrolytes and lead to seizures.

Helpful References:

Books

- Feed Me, I'm Yours by Vicki Lansky
- Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense by Ellyn Satter
- Cooking Light First Foods: Baby Steps to a Lifetime of Healthy Eating

Websites

- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx>
- Strong4life.com

