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Do's and Don'ts of Starting Solid Foods

- Do not give the following foods until one year of age: **eggs, peanut butter, seafood, or honey**. These foods are highly allergenic. Waiting to start these foods until one year of age decreases their chances of developing an allergy to them.
- Solids may be started as early as 3 ½ to 4 months but should not be started later than 6 months of age.
- Start with ground rice cereal first. This may be given in one of two ways: 1) mixed in a bowl with breast milk or formula to an “oatmeal” consistency and given with a spoon or 2) mixed with breast milk or formula one teaspoon per ounce and given in a bottle. If you choose the second way then you will have to slit a nipple so that the thickened milk can come out more easily.
- About every 3 to 4 days a new food can be introduced. The order I usually recommend is rice cereal, then vegetables, and then fruits. For vegetables, the order I usually recommend is yellow vegetables (squash), then orange vegetables (sweet potatoes and carrots), then green vegetables (green beans and peas) vegetables. However, it is okay if you change the order that vegetables are introduced.
- Feed your child 3 times per day: breakfast, lunch and dinner. Try to have them eat meals with the family. This helps them to get interested in what the family is eating. Remember, the ultimate goal is to transition them from a predominantly liquid diet to a predominantly solid diet. Also you eventually want them to eat what you are eating so that you don't have to prepare two meals each time.
- Pick one or two foods to feed them at each meal.
- You can give some breast milk or formula during a solid meal to help “wash it down.”
- Your child should be nursing 4 to 6 times per day or taking between 18 to 24 ounces of formula per day once solid food is started. This amount should stay constant for the rest of their first year of life. If your child is nursing more than 4 to 6 times per day or taking more than 24 ounces per day then they are not eating enough solid food. There is no magic quantity of solids that you are supposed to give at each meal.
- Avoid giving an all fruit meal.
- Chicken, turkey, and ham can be tried at 6 months of age. Beef can be tried at 9 months of age.
- In general, I recommend Gerber baby food but store brand is acceptable. Stage I foods can be started at 4-6 months, stage II at 6 months, and stage III/graduates at 9 months of age.
- It is okay for you to give your child “tastes” of certain things at the dinner table.
- You can make your own baby food if you prefer. Remember to adequately blend the food so that it can be easily swallowed for someone with very few or no teeth.
- You can give babies a multivitamin. I usually recommend liquid polyvitamins with iron (Polyvisol with Iron®) 1 ml by mouth once per day. Unfortunately, this does not taste very good. However, it can be mixed into 1 to 2 ounces of breast milk or formula and given in a bottle.



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Starting Solid Foods: Myths and Facts

Myth: Starting cereal helps babies sleep through the night.

Fact: Breast-fed babies generally do not sleep completely through the night until you wean them from the breast. Formula-fed babies can sometimes sleep through the night as early as 2 months of age but this is not universally true. This misconception about solid food and sleeping sometimes leads parents to start solids too early which exposes them to the development of food allergies.

Myth: Babies need extra water.

Fact: Babies get all the water they need from breast milk or formula. If you want, you can give 1 to 2 ounces of water per day but no more. If too much water, juice, tea or certain other liquids are given this can result in electrolyte imbalances which can cause seizures. If your baby is sick and refusing formula, they should be given an infant electrolyte solution (e.g., Pedialyte®, Enfalyte®, or Kaoelectrolyte®) to help prevent dehydration.

Myth: Iron causes constipation.

Fact: Iron is a very important element for the construction of hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is the oxygen carrying protein in your blood. If you do not have enough iron you can get anemic. Iron does not cause constipation contrary to popular belief. I do not recommend formulas such as Enfamil Low Iron® because it does not have enough iron. If you feel your child is constipated, try 1-2 ounces of pear or prune juice daily to help loosen stools.

More coming soon...