

Vibrant Family Medicine & Midwifery

Introduction to Solid Foods

The most common question mothers ask is when do I give my baby solid food? The answer has varied from decade to decade, ranging from rice cereal at 6 weeks to no solid food for one year. Our belief is that your baby will tell you when they are ready for food.

Why is it important to wait before introducing solid foods?

Infants' digestive tracts are immature and develop slowly. A big change happens at approximately 6 months of age when digestive enzymes needed for the breakdown of different foods are now present. Also, IgA, a protective immune globulin, just begins to line the digestive tract at approximately 7 months of age. Before this happens the infant's digestive tract has no protection at all against allergenic substances. This is the reason for introducing hypoallergenic foods first.

Most importantly, pay attention to your child's cues. Unless there is a specific medical concern, there is no nutritional need to rush feeding your child solid foods. Your baby will know when the right time to eat comes, just as they know when to crawl, walk and talk.

The following behaviors from your baby may be indications that they are ready to try solid food:

1. Can they sit up by themselves?
—this is necessary for the swallowing mechanism of food versus milk
2. Are they showing interest in food?
—often when babies are ready to eat they will grab at your food, imitate chewing motions and watch you carefully as you eat
3. Is your child getting teeth?
—another sign of the body preparing for solid food
4. When you feed your child do they swallow or do they thrust the food back out with their tongue?
—the tongue thrusting reflex begins to diminish at age 6-7 months. It is a physical mechanism present in infants to prevent choking. If your child is spitting the food out, hold off for a little while and then try again.

Vibrant Family

Medicine & Midwifery

Solid Food Introduction Schedule

6 months (approximately) 1-2 Tablespoons/day

These are hypoallergenic, pureed, mashed foods containing iron. This is a time for tasting foods. The bulk of nutrition is still from breast milk or formula. If any foods are too sweet, try again in about 1 month.

| | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------|
| blackberry | stewed prunes | pear | carrot |
| broccoli | cherry | cauliflower | peach |
| apricot | banana | kiwi | grape |
| Jerusalem artichoke | sprouts (blended in water) | squash | yam |
| spinach & other leafy greens | | | |

9 months 2-4 Tablespoons/day

These foods are high in zinc and good for the immune system. Be careful, some of these may be hard to digest. If so, wait a month and try again.

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|----------------|--------|
| sweet potato | cabbage | lentils | apples |
| papaya | blueberry | avocado | potato |
| string bean | nectarine | split pea soup | millet |
| black strap molasses | | | |

12 months 4-10 Tablespoons/day

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------|-----------------|---------|
| brown rice cereal | peas | dairy products* | soy* |
| asparagus | wheat* | rice milk* | barley |
| tofu* | eggs* | goat milk* | juice** |
| parsnip | honey | | |

*if soy, dairy, wheat, dairy, or eggs are known allergens (as opposed to sensitivities) in the family, please talk to your doctor about when and how to introduce these foods

**dilute by 50% with water—juices should be used only as a treat and not a regular part of the diet due to their high sugar content

18 months

| | | | |
|-------------|----------|------|--------|
| beets | lamb | kelp | tahini |
| beet greens | turkey | rye | beans |
| chicken | rutabaga | | |

21 months

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------|
| almond butter | eggplant | pineapple | orange |
| cashew butter | grapefruit | brewer's yeast | walnut |
| sunflower seed | peanut butter | | |