



Introducing Your Infant to the Wonderful World of Food

When to start the first bite

0-4 months: Only give breast milk or formula

4-6 months: Some babies show interest in foods at this age and may be able to start with supplementary feedings

6 months: Look for signs of being ready to eat food

Signs of being ready for food

- Interest in foods others are eating
- Waking with hunger during the night, after previously being satisfied with 5-6 daytime breast milk or formula feedings
- Tongue does not keep pushing food out of mouth. Baby chews and swallows food well
- Strong head control and stability while sitting
- Good growth

How and when to introduce new foods (general guidelines)

4-6 months: Thin/liquid cereals or meat protein purees.

After 6 months: Strained or mashed vegetables and fruits

After 8-9 months: Well-chopped table foods, including meat and other protein sources

Newest feeding guidelines are not specific about which foods to introduce first. Studies show that babies may have fewer allergies if foods are introduced earlier rather than waiting. Here are some traditional suggestions for first foods.

1st food to introduce (4~6 months) is iron-fortified infant cereal

- Mix the cereal with breast milk, formula, or water that is lukewarm (about 1 tsp infant cereal to 4-5 tsp liquid)
- Do not put this mixture into a bottle, unless thickening food for medical reasons. This can increase risk of overweight and cause your baby to miss the opportunity to develop eating skills
- Start by spoon-feeding your baby slowly, once per day, and stop offering the cereal when he or she seems to have had enough; begin to increase feedings as interest rises
- Once your infant is doing well with about ½ cup of rice cereal per day, offer new foods one at a time, spaced out by three days each, so that if he or she is allergic or does not tolerate a food the reaction will be evident and traceable.

2nd foods to introduce are vegetables and fruits

- Strained or completely mashed
- Introduce one at a time (no more than 1 new food every 3 days)
- Try well-cooked, pureed vegetables like sweet potatoes, squash, green beans, or carrots, then later try avocado, applesauce, bananas, pears, or peaches
- Other options include tomatoes, strawberries, and citrus.

3rd foods to introduce (~8-9 months) are ground protein sources and appropriate finger-foods

- Quality proteins include meat, poultry, and cheese/yogurt. Babies may have eggs, fish, nut and peanut products, cheese and yogurt at this age, though it may be prudent to first introduce these foods at home
- By this stage, foods do not need to be pureed; they can be soft and mashed with a fork. Children will usually enjoy playing with food and are becoming interested in self-feeding, which is an important developmental skill to be encouraged. Using a spoon might get messy, but it is a good step for the baby who is ready to try it; finger foods can be a simple way to begin
- Soft and small chunks of whole-wheat bread can be used for self-feeding practice

Other feeding notes

- Make sure that all foods are cooled down, well mashed, and unseasoned
- Do not add any salt, sugar, or other condiments to foods until at least 12-24 months: the simpler the better
- Do not offer any sweetened foods or drinks to prevent creating a taste for sweets, since a preference for dessert is easily acquired and a “sweet tooth” can be difficult to overcome

Feeding Precautions

- Do not give infants honey or any foods containing it due to risk of botulism toxicity
- Do not save the left-overs of a jar that has been double-dipped into. First scoop out a portion of food onto a plate and feed from there to minimize waste while keeping food safe from bacteria
- Make sure that when baby advances from purees to soft foods that they are all finely chopped or mashed to minimize risk of choking. Potentially dangerous foods to watch out for include sausage, hot dogs, nuts, grapes, raisins, beans, apple pieces, popcorn, round candy, hard chunks of cheese and uncooked vegetables (especially carrots) – avoid foods that are not able to be finely diced

How much food do they need?

- Infants are usually skilled at regulating their intake based on appetite and energy needs
- Be sensitive to behaviors such as leaning back in chair, turning head away from spoon, refusing to eat more, or playing with food or utensils – these signal that your baby has had enough to eat
- The parent’s role is to provide nutritious food options; the child decides how much to eat
- Remember the goal of feeding is good nutrition, not better sleep!
- Babies will eat about ¼ of what an adult eats.

Typical food patterns (will vary for each child):

6-12 months:

- Start small and simple
- Advance to about 2-4 Tablespoons of iron-fortified rice cereal 2 times/day, 2 Tablespoons of pureed vegetables 2 times/day, 2 Tablespoons of mashed fruit 2 times/day
- Amounts of food can increase according to individual interest and appetite
- Continue breast milk or formula until one year of age
- By around 8-9 months add a serving of ground protein with meals

12 months and up:

- Regular foods will replace breast milk or formula as the main source of nutrition
- 3 meals and 2 snacks is a typical daily intake

- Having a routine will help your child to have a lifelong healthy weight, a higher acceptance for new foods as well as with the stabilization of moods
- An easy method for filling a plate is to start with about ¼ of an average adult portion

I am not sure if my baby likes vegetables:

If your baby does not like a food after trying it, don't force it – respect his likes and dislikes, but do offer it to him again. **It may take 10 tastes of a food before it is accepted.** For increased likelihood of acceptance, try introducing a new food at the start of meal. Those green beans he spit out after the first taste may just become his favorite vegetable next week! Early exposure to a variety of fruits and vegetables provides an opportunity to cultivate an appreciation for these foods, which helps develop a taste for these healthful foods later in life.

When and How to Introduce Beverages

Infants typically meet all of their fluid needs exclusively from breast milk and infant formula through 6 months of age; once you start introducing solid foods, additional water in a bottle or cup should be given with meals and snacks.

Bottle or no bottle: By 9 months of age babies should be advancing from a bottle to cup, and be independently drinking all beverages in a cup by 12 months. If that skill is not emphasized during this window of development, children often become resistant to giving up their bottle at an older age. Children should only receive human milk or formula in a bottle. Do not give cow's milk, juice, or other sweetened beverages in a bottle.

Milk: It is best to continue with breast milk or infant formula until the age of 12 months; wait to replace these with cow's milk until your child is at least one year old. When cow's milk is given, use whole milk from 12-24 months of age.

Juice: Even 100% juice is high in sugar and is not as healthful as eating fruits. It is best to stay away from juices and other sweetened drinks. If you decide to give a small amount of juice, limit intake to 3-4 oz of 100% juice. Diluting juice with water is another good strategy for reducing juice intake.

Bedtime drink: If your baby needs a bottle to fall asleep, do not put milk, formula, juice, or other beverages into it- fill it with water to prevent tooth decay from the extended nighttime contact of sugar on teeth. NOTE: hugging, singing, reading and other care can usually be even more soothing than a bottle to help your child fall asleep if she is being fussy. If she is truly hungry, feed before putting to bed.

call time: 8:30am-9:00am
www.framinghampediatrics.com