

# STARTING YOUR BABY ON SOLID FOODS

## General Information

- You should generally start solid foods between 4-6 months of age. Starting solids earlier than this will not cause your baby to sleep longer at night and may cause digestive problems.
- For your baby's first year, breastmilk or formula is the most important part of her diet. As you introduce solids, make sure that she is still drinking adequate amounts of formula or breast milk (see table on reverse).
- Feed your baby all solids from a spoon. Putting cereal in the bottle is not a good idea, and part of learning about solids is learning to eat with a spoon.
- You may want to start solids at a time when your baby is hungry but not starving, such as after he has had a little formula or breast milk, but not after a full milk feeding when he is not at all hungry.
- Try to introduce new foods with enthusiasm, but do not force your child to eat something. If your child is not interested in a new food, put it away and try introducing it again later.
- When introducing new foods, there should be an interval of 2-3 days between each new food so that you will know if your baby is having a reaction to a new food. If your baby develops vomiting, rash, or diarrhea, please do not give that food again and discuss this reaction at your next visit. If your child develops hives or breathing problems, please call the office.

## What Foods to Introduce (also see table on reverse)

- Somewhere between 4 and 6 months old, you may begin to introduce first foods such as infant cereals, pureed fruits, pureed vegetables, and pureed meats. Start with about one or two tablespoons of food once or twice a day. It is important to make sure that some of your infant's early foods contain iron, which is important for all babies' health. Iron-rich foods include iron-fortified baby cereals, meats, and beans.
- Once your child is about 8 months old and sitting up well, you may introduce finger foods such as biscuits, Cheerios, pasta, soft bread/toast, small pieces of soft vegetables or fruits, and shredded chicken or meat.
- **A note on constipation:** Sometimes when a baby starts on solid foods, he will become constipated (hard stools). If your baby becomes constipated, use whole wheat or barley cereal instead of rice cereal and avoid bananas and sweet potatoes, which are constipating. All the fruits which begin with "P" (prunes, plums, pears, peaches) will help soften your baby's stool, so give them often if your baby is having hard stools. If your baby is constipated, you may also give him 1 ounce of prune juice mixed with 1 ounce of water every day or two.

## Beverages

- For the whole first year, breastmilk or formula should be your baby's primary beverage. Typical amounts are listed in the table at the end of the sheet.
- After the age of 6 months, about 4 ounces of fluoridated water (tap water in many towns) is good for your baby's teeth. If your water supply is not fluoridated, please ask your doctor about fluoride drops.
- Fruit juice tends to be high in sugar and fills up babies so they eat less nutritious food. We do NOT recommend giving juice to your baby in the first year.

## Food Sensitivities and Allergies

- While food allergies seem to be more common among children than they were in the past, no one knows the reason for this. We do not recommend restricting any specific foods for babies because of concerns about allergies, but if you have food allergy questions or a family history of specific food allergies, please discuss this with your provider.
- Citrus fruits and tomatoes may cause a rash around the mouth in young children, but this is not a true allergy and is not dangerous; if it happens, you may want to cut back on these types of foods and try them again at a later time.

**CAUTION!**

- Nuts, whole grapes, spoonfuls of peanut butter, round slices of hot dog, hard raw vegetables, popcorn, hard candies, and ice are all **choking hazards** and should not be given to your child until at least 4 years old. All foods you give younger children should be soft and in small pieces.
- Do not give your baby honey until he is over 1 year old (honey can carry botulism spores that are dangerous for a young baby but not for older children or adults).

**Feeding Suggestions For Your Baby**

	<b>Breastmilk or Formula</b>	<b>Cereals/Grains</b>	<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Fruits</b>	<b>Meats/Beans/Eggs /Other Proteins</b>
<b>4-6 Months</b>  (solids 1 or 2 times a day)	5-6 times (24-36 ounces total)	Baby cereal 1-3 Tablespoons per serving mixed with breastmilk, formula, or water; start once a day and increase to twice a day	Start with 1 Tablespoon and increase gradually to about 2 ounces per serving; may use store-bought Stage 1 baby food vegetables or homemade cooked pureed vegetables	Start with 1 Tablespoon and increase gradually to about 2 ounces per serving; may use store-bought Stage 1 baby food fruits or homemade fresh, pureed fruits	Start with 1 Tablespoon and increase gradually up to about 2 ounces per serving; may use store-bought Stage 1 baby food meats or beans or homemade cooked pureed meats or beans
<b>6-9 Months</b>  (solids 2 or 3 times a day)	5-6 times (24-36 ounces total)	2 servings baby cereal; may start biscuits or soft pieces of bread/toast when baby is sitting up well (NOTE: whole grain bread products are healthier than white bread products)	1-2 servings/day of 2-4 ounces each; may use store-bought Stage 1 or Stage 2 baby foods or homemade cooked, mashed vegetables	1-2 servings/day of 2-4 ounces each; may use store-bought Stage 1 or Stage 2 baby foods or homemade cooked, mashed vegetables	1-2 servings/day of 2-4 ounces each; may use store-bought Stage 1 or Stage 2 baby foods or homemade very soft shredded meats or beans
<b>9-12 Months</b>  (solids 3 times a day)	4-5 times (16-24 ounces total)	2 servings/day baby cereal, oatmeal, Cheerios, soft breads, or pasta	1-2 servings/day of about 4 ounces each; may use store-bought baby foods or homemade soft, cooked vegetables	1-2 servings/day of about 4 ounces each; may use store-bought baby foods or homemade soft pieces of fruit	1-2 servings/day of meats, fish, beans, yogurt, cheese, eggs (maximum 3 eggs/week)