



Start Solids at 4-6 Months

That's the recommended time to introduce solid foods -- usually rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula, to start. But it's not just about age. Before starting solids, babies should be able to sit up, turn their heads away, and make chewing motions. And, they should be over the "extrusion reflex" that makes them spit out anything but liquid.



Baby Still Needs Breast Milk or Formula

Babies typically don't eat a lot of solid foods right away. So think of solids as an addition to your baby's diet, not as a replacement for breast milk or formula. Remember, you're introducing solid foods, not totally changing baby's diet. That will happen gradually.



Why do most parents start with rice cereal?

There's no hard-and-fast rule about what solid foods you should give your baby first. With a single-grain, iron-fortified infant cereal -- such as rice cereal -- it may be easier to notice any food allergies than with a cereal made from several grains. You may want to mix it with formula or breast milk to get a runny consistency at first, until your baby gets used to the new texture.



Eating Solids Takes Practice

Being fed by a spoon is new to your baby. Up until now, they've only had a liquid diet, and they'll need practice to get used to the spoon and to the feel of having solid food in their mouth. So don't expect them to eat a whole lot -- maybe a teaspoon or two at a time -- when you start. Instead of trying to get them to eat a certain amount, focus on letting them get used to the experience.

Get Started on Fruits and Vegetables, One at a Time.

Fruits, vegetables, grains, and even pureed meats can all be on the menu for your baby. You may want to introduce them one at a time to see how your baby reacts. If your baby won't eat them at first, try again later. Tell your pediatrician about any possible allergic reactions. Use soft baby food from a jar, or soften foods by heating or pureeing them. Put just enough on the spoon for your baby to swallow easily.



Avoid Milk and Honey — for a While.

Most pediatricians recommend waiting until after baby's first birthday to start offering cow's milk because some babies may have a hard time digesting it before then. And, don't give honey to babies younger than 1 year (some pediatricians say up to 2 years) because of possible botulism risk that a baby's developing immune system can't fend off.



Stop When Baby's Ready to Stop

Pay attention and your baby will let you know when he or she is done eating. They might swat at the spoon, turn their head away, zip their lips tightly, spit out whatever you put in their mouth, or cry. Don't make them eat more than they want. Kids will eat when they're hungry and stop when they're full. Honoring those instincts may help them avoid overeating now and when they get older.



Got a Fussy Eater? Don't Fret.

Just because your baby doesn't immediately like a new food doesn't mean he never will. Wait a few days and try again. It may take your child more than a couple of times before giving a new food a chance. Remember, you're a role model, so your baby may be more interested in foods they see you eating and enjoying. But again, don't force your child to eat, and don't make a big deal about new foods.





Things Won't be Tidy. That's OK.

As your baby grows, he'll try to feed himself. Chances are, a good bit of food is heading for their face, hands, hair, bib, clothes, or high chair tray -- not to mention you or any surfaces within flinging range. Learning to eat solid food is a full-body, tactile experience for your baby. Put a mat underneath baby's highchair to catch some of the mess, dress accordingly, and be patient -- this phase won't last forever.



Try Finger Foods When Baby's Ready

Around 9 months or so, your baby will be able to pick up small pieces of soft table food to eat. You'll still need to spoon-feed for a while, and continue formula or breast milk. Some great "finger foods" include ripe banana pieces, cooked chunks of carrots, cottage cheese, well-cooked pasta, dry cereal, and scrambled eggs. Avoid choking hazards like hard candy, chips, raw vegetables, grapes or raisins, hard cheese, and whole hot dogs.

Source: http://www.medicinenet.com/baby_food_and_nutrition_pictures_slideshow_solids/article.htm

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