

Time to Eat!

Introducing Solid Foods to Your child

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When is Your Child Ready?

Your baby will tell you when it is time to start eating solid food. It is best to hold off on solids until you observe the signs that he or she is ready. Your baby should be able sit up unassisted, have some teeth and begin to exhibit an interest in food.

Keep in mind that, in the beginning, food introduction is a social experience, not a primary source of nutrition. There will be lots of throwing, dropping, spitting and splashing! Relax. Enjoy it! If the food goes in with a smile, baby is ready and willing. If the food comes back with a grimace, then try again another day.

Every child is different and will be on his own schedule. It is normal for some children to be ready for food at six months while others may wait until seven. At around six months, most babies are producing the enzymes and antibodies necessary to handle new foods. Earlier than six months, babies are not yet physiologically equipped for food and introducing solid food may lead to the development of food allergies.

Phase I: No Earlier than Six Months:

At first, feedings should be small. Think of solid food as a complement to breast milk, not as a substitute. Your baby may only eat a teaspoon of food per feeding. Food should be *strained or pureed* and be fed in very small bites. We advise that your baby's first "spoon" be the tip of your clean finger.

It is best to introduce one single food for three or four days and then bring in another one. There is debate over introducing fruits first, vegetables first or grains first. Some people say that introducing sweet fruits first sets the child up to not eat any grains or vegetables by giving them a sweet tooth. Others say that breast milk tastes sweet to kids, so fruits are the logical first step. There are no hard and fast rules. Ultimately the decision must be made by you, the parent, based on what you feel is right for your child.

With the introduction of each food, watch carefully for signs of food allergies. **Signs of food allergies include:** a rash around the mouth or anus, congestion, wheezing, red eyes, ear infections, constipation or diarrhea. A mild reaction means that you should discontinue the food and possibly reintroduce it in a few months. If a more severe reaction happens, consult with your doctor.

Foods to begin with:

Rice Cereal
Barley cereal
Millet cereal
Yams
Beets

Carrots
Squash
Bananas
Stewed Apples or Pears*

***Beware!** Apples, pears, carrots and beets must be cooked to avoid choking!

Phase II: 8-12 Months:

Food must be pureed or mashed, however, it can have a lumpier consistency. Baby can start to pick up fingers full of food and may begin to drink from a cup.

Foods to introduce:

Teething Biscuits (no wheat)	Cauliflower
Nectarines	Green Beans
Peaches	Cabbage
Apricots	Beet Greens
Blueberries	Avocado
Plums	Lamb
Pineapple	Tofu**
Split peas	Turkey
Swiss Chard	

Phase III: 12 –20 months:

Baby should be learning to participate in meal time and enjoy her experience!
At this time food should be chopped or mashed.

Foods to consider:

Fish (Wild Salmon)	Broccoli
Eggs**	Garlic
Corn**	Onions
Grapes	All Legumes
Mango	Greens (spinach, collards, kale)
All berries	Molasses
Kiwi	Yogurt
Cucumber	Goat Milk
Lettuce	

Phase III: 18-24 Months:

By this time you may need to make your child's food time creative in order to hold attention at the table. Child may be using his own spoon and fork.

Mushrooms (Cooked)
Tahini
Kelp
Nuts** (be careful with peanuts)
Chicken
Beef

****Common Allergenic Foods at any age:**

The following foods are known to be among the biggest culprits of food allergies and should be introduced under a watchful eye and in strict moderation:

Wheat	Corn
Dairy (Cheese, ice cream)	Citrus
Soy (tofu, tempeh, soy milk)	Peanuts
Sugar	Shellfish
Nightshades (potatoes, tomatoes and eggplant)	

Resources and Links:

www.askdrsears.com – Very comprehensive and open minded information from a prominent pediatrician.

www.hallpublications.com – Solid food introduction for the allergic child

www.nncc.org/Nutrition/make.babyfd.html –instructions and recipes on making home made baby food

www.vegfamily.com – suggestions on raising a child with a vegan or vegetarian diet

Book: *Le Petit Appetit Gourmet Cookbook* by Lisa Barnes

This information was compiled from numerous sources including...

Dr. William Mitchell, Dr. Sears, An assortment of different food introduction schedules from various clinics, [Natural Family Living](#) the *Mothering Magazine* Guide to Parenting,