

Introducing Solid Food

Between 4 - 6 months is the best time to introduce solid foods. Some babies are ready earlier than others, and there is no "magic" age that is best. Only one new food should be introduced for 3 days: if there is a reaction, it is easier to detect by using this approach. Combinations are fine after the baby has had all the foods individually. Babies do not need desserts or other foods with added sugar.

Cereals : Begin with rice, 1-2 tablespoons mixed as directed on the package. Feed with a spoon. Start with once a day and gradually increase to A.M. and P.M. feedings. Oatmeal and barley may be added, but avoid wheat until later.

Fruits : Fruits may be started following the introduction of cereal. Begin with applesauce, bananas, pears, etc., Fruits may be mixed into the cereal. Avoid citrus and fresh berries until later.

Vegetables : Following fruits, vegetables are usually introduced (perhaps as a third meal). In general, babies will stop eating when they are full.

Meats : Meats may be added after 6 months of age. Chicken or turkey are good first choices. Beef or ham may be offered occasionally if desired. Many babies do not initially like the taste of meat. It may be mixed with their food and is generally tolerated well. At this time egg yolk may also be introduced. I recommend waiting a little time before egg whites.

Juices : Juices are of limited nutritional value, but can help prevent constipation as solids are added to the diet. The best juices to help with hard stools are: apple, pear, and prune. Avoid citrus (orange, grapefruit, etc.) until around a year of age.

Milk : Breast milk or formula should be continued until one year of age. Solids should be given first and followed by formula or breast milk. The amount of milk consumed will decrease with the introduction of solids.

Junior (or Chunky) foods : At nine months of age soft table or junior foods may be introduced, gradually increasing the texture. Avoid preparing table foods with excessive salt and other additives.

DO NOT GIVE HONEY TO YOUNG INFANTS.

With the addition of cereal, you may notice a drastic change in your baby's stools. The stools are less frequent and become pasty. **THIS IS NOT CONSTIPATION**. Rather, it is the normal change in stool frequency and consistency when solids are introduced. True constipation in babies occurs when the stools are very hard (like rocks!) and very infrequent (every 4 - 5 days!).

Introduction of Solid Foods (When, How, and Why)

*Pay particular attention to the note about nitrates if you are planning to make your own baby food

Age/Stage	Cereals/Grains	Fruits	Vegetables	Protein/Meat	Dairy	Other
4-6 months	Rice Barley Oat	Apples Pears Bananas	Sweet Potatoes Acorn/Butternut Squash Green Beans Carrots* (commercially prepared)			
6-8 months	Rice Barley Oat	Apricots Avocados Nectarines Peaches Plums Prunes Pumpkin	Peas Yellow Squash Zucchini	Chicken Turkey		
8-10 months	Rice Barley Oat Wheat grains (after 9mos) Multi-grain or plain Cheerios	Blueberries ^a Cantaloupe Kiwi Mangoes Papaya	Asparagus Broccoli Cauliflower Eggplant White Potatoes After 9 mos: Homemade Carrots*	Beans/Legumes (split peas, lentils, etc.) After 9 mos: Egg yolks Lean Beef Pork Ham (fresh only) Chicken Turkey Tofu	After 9 mos: Yogurt Cheese	
10-12 months	Pastas Wheat cereals Bagels	Berries ^a Cherries Grapes (choking hazard- cut into quarters)	Artichokes Beets* Corn Cucumbers Spinach* Tomatoes	White Fish (e.g. Cod, Haddock, etc.)		
After 12 months		Strawberries Citrus	Corn	Whole Eggs	Whole Milk ^o	Honey

* Root vegetables such as carrots, beets, and broccoli as well as green leafy vegetables such as spinach, cabbage and kale absorb a high amount of nitrates from fertilizers. Preparing these vegetables at home, even using organics, can cause nitrate toxicity in your infant. For this reason, it is better to wait until after 9 months to introduce these foods (when your infant can better tolerate them) or use commercially-prepared products.

^a Many believe that blueberries fall under the "no berries until after age 12 months old" rule. Blueberries are not really a common allergen - they are not in the "berry" family. Blueberries are related to cranberries – which are among the less allergenic foods. Blueberries are not related to strawberries, raspberries and the like.

^o Only whole milk, rather than low fat, should be used until 2 y.o. as young children need the higher fat content.