



Orchard Pediatrics, PC

– Newborn through Adolescent Care –

FEEDING SOLID FOODS TO YOUR BABY

Babies generally need solid foods to complement breast or bottle-feeding between the ages of 4 to 6 months. Here are some general guidelines to begin feedings.

CEREAL

1. Begin with dry rice cereal (use oatmeal if your baby is on soy formula or has infrequent and firm stools). Dry cereal is better than the jar type because it contains more iron. Shake out 1 to 2 tablespoons into a bowl and mix it with water, breast milk or formula into a smooth creamy texture. Your baby may take 1-2 teaspoons the first few feedings.
2. Offer cereal before a bottle or breast feeding, twice daily--late morning and evening are good times for most babies. Your baby will then take a bottle or breast-feed shortly after finishing the cereal (although your baby may take a little less breast milk or formula after cereal).
3. An infant seat placed on a 45-degree incline is a comfortable place to first feed your baby (*Remember not to leave your baby unattended in the seat on the counter or table*). As babies sit up better later on, a high chair can be used. Your baby needs to get used to a spoon and swallowing, so begin with small amounts. Be patient--at first there may be some tongue thrusting and spitting cereal back.
4. Most babies will develop a way to let you know they have had enough--keeping mouth closed, turning head away, slowing down, etc. Generally, it's a good idea to feed your baby till you get the "signal".

OTHER SOLID FOODS - FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND MEATS

1. After your baby is doing well on cereal for a week or so, fruits and vegetables can be started. The first type of food to select is "strained".
2. The fruits to choose from are the non-citrus fruits; the vegetables are squash, sweet potatoes, carrots, green beans and peas.
3. As you select a fruit or vegetable for your baby, give only one new food at a time for several days. This method will allow you to clearly identify a problem food. It will take several weeks to go through the fruits and vegetables. Many babies will take fruit with the morning cereal. In the evening, they will take vegetable and cereal, perhaps with some fruit. A good rule of thumb is yellow vegetables 2-3 times a week and green vegetables 4-5 times a week.
4. When your baby is between 6-8 months, the next group of foods to try is meats. Try the plain single meats, one at a time for 4-5 days. Start with chicken or turkey and try the red meats next--lamb, veal and beef. Meats can be offered for the evening feeding. Generally, babies should have one meat meal per day.
5. The amount of solid food that is right for each baby is very individual. Feeding babies till they are comfortably satisfied is a good rule of thumb. If your baby dislikes a certain food, try it again at a later time.
6. As your baby gets older, you can introduce some combination dinners for some meals--for example, Chicken and Vegetables Dinner. Active, crawling babies between 6 and 9 months will often need 3 solid food feedings a day. As babies reach 9 months of age, you can advance to the "junior" foods, which have a little more consistency.
7. Avoid "dessert" foods for your baby such as puddings and fruit desserts. Citrus, egg, fish and strawberries should be avoided until age 9-12 months because of possible allergy. Avoid nuts until at least age 2.
8. We do not recommend the "Infant Feeder" devices. Spoon-feeding is an enjoyable learning experience for your baby.

PREPARING FOODS

1. Baby food manufacturers make their foods as strained, junior and toddler (for babies over one year). One manufacturer makes a dry food to which you add tap water to make strained foods.
2. Should you make your own baby food, do not add salt or sugar to the food.
3. *Do not heat formula, breast milk or baby foods in a microwave oven.* Besides possible loss of nutrients in the milk or formula, small hot spots develop that despite shaking or stirring can burn your baby. Many babies are burned by food that is microwaved -- *it's not worth the risk.*

JUICES

We do not recommend juice because it has very little nutritional value for your baby. (A small amount of juice can be helpful for a baby who is constipated).

CUP AND BOTTLE HABITS

1. When you first begin cup use, make sure your baby is sitting up comfortably. As you are holding the cup, gently tip it up so your baby can begin swallowing.
2. Babies like various types of cups - with and without spouts. Most babies by one year of age can begin to hold a cup. At first, you may need to remove the plug from a non-spill cup at first so your baby can drink from it.
4. For bottle feeding, *never lay your baby down with a bottle.* Besides making weaning difficult, it promotes tooth decay and ear problems. Always hold your baby during bottle feedings. Don't let your baby carry bottles around the house.
5. Begin bottle weaning around 12-15 months if your baby hasn't already started to lose interest. Gradually decrease both the volume and frequency of bottle feedings to have your baby off bottles by around 15 months.

FINGER FOODS

1. You can introduce finger foods as your baby nears 6-9 months, is sitting up well, and has a pincer grasp.
2. Begin with small pieces of soft foods; Cheerios, banana, teething bagels. Watch for gagging and choking - if your baby does this more than occasionally you should speak to the doctor. Avoid foods that are a potential choking problem for babies like whole hot dog slices and grapes. Do not introduce foods with nuts until your baby is two years old.
3. Your baby will enjoy self-feeding more and more, and will probably feed this way for the most part after 12 months or so.