

INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS

Before about 4 months your baby needs only the formula and or breast milk he or she has been consuming since birth.

Supplementing solids before that time can result in food allergies and obesity.

At around 4 months your baby will lose his or her tongue thrust reflex. You will know when this reflex is lost when your baby stops pushing his or her tongue against a spoon or anything else you put in its mouth. This happens right around when your baby has increased energy needs requiring increased calories through solid foods.

Your baby has a strong need to suck and the baby who has the bottle or breast taken away too early or abruptly will compensate by sucking on a finger or a pacifier. To avoid this weaning should be done slowly and gradually.

4-6 MONTHS

For most babies the first solid food is rice cereal, followed by oatmeal and barley. It is better to introduce these foods first, and things like wheat and mixed cereals last because they can cause allergies if introduced too early.

To minimize risk of choking, feed your baby sitting up either in your lap or in an infant seat. If your infant cries or turns away with the feeding don't force him or her to eat. Meal times should be enjoyable not stressful.

Always spoon feed your baby solid foods. Putting solids into a nipple can lead to excessive weight gain. Eating with a spoon also instills the normal eating process of sitting up, taking bites from a spoon, resting between bites, and stopping when full.

To ensure the spoon isn't too wide use a standard baby spoon or a small coffee spoon and start with a half of a spoonful or less. Before you start you may also want to give some formula or breast milk to take the edge off your babies hunger and ease the transition.

Once you have given cereal 2-3 times a day, for several weeks, you can start to introduce other foods. Start with foods that are easiest to digest such as yellow vegetables, squash, sweet potatoes, and carrots.

When introducing new foods it is recommended that you start each food about 2-3 days apart. This instills the detection of an allergy if a reaction such as a rash, diarrhea, or vomiting occurs.

After introducing yellow and green vegetables, you may wish to begin fruits also starting each a few days apart and watching for allergic reactions. If your baby does show the signs of an allergy refrain from offering it again until you discuss it with your pediatrician.

Once your baby sits up, you can start finger foods that are easy to swallow and require no chewing such as well cooked cut up green beans, peas, potatoes, and small pieces of wafer type crackers or cookies.