

Baby's First Food - A Healthy Start

Children learn to eat healthy if parents provide healthy food at an early age.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents start giving their baby solid foods at about 6 months of age. These first foods should be healthy and easy for baby to digest.

Not all babies are ready for solid foods at the same time. It will take time for your baby to learn to eat solid food. Your baby will also be taking breast milk or formula, while eating solid food, until he is 1-year old.

Be patient as your baby starts eating solid foods. You want this time of learning to be fun for *you and your baby*.

When ready for solid foods, your baby will:

- Grab food from your plate.
- Not push food out of her mouth with her tongue.
- Reach and grasp food with his fingers.
- Want to eat more often — even after 8 to 10 feedings of formula or breast milk per day.
- Have doubled his birth weight or weighs at least 13 lbs.

When you think your baby is ready for solid food:

- Talk to her doctor.
- Start slowly. Feed one time during the day when baby is awake and happy. Consider between or after a milk feeding.
- Feed your baby in a high chair that has a safety strap or in an infant seat.
- *Expect a mess.* Have a wash cloth handy.
- Use a small, smooth baby spoon.
- Start with 1 to 2 teaspoons of baby rice cereal. Mix with breast milk, formula, or cool water that has been boiled. Gradually increase it to 2–3 tablespoons.
- Introduce one new food every 2–3 days. After 2–3 days of eating this food, observe if your baby has any reaction — rash, diarrhea, fussiness after eating, or an increase in intestinal gas.
- *Never add cereal to your baby's bottle.* Your baby needs to learn to eat solids with a spoon.



Good foods for baby's first meal include:

mashed bananas and avocados, pureed cooked apples and pears, pureed cooked potato, carrots, zucchini, and pumpkin. Baked pureed beef and chicken help with iron stores.

First foods to avoid include:

eggs, cow's milk, honey (not safe until after baby's first birthday), and citrus fruits.

Homemade: beets, corn, collard greens, spinach and turnips contain high levels of nitrates which could cause anemia in babies. Serve store bought jars of these foods.

If you buy prepared baby foods at the store,

avoid foods that contain fillers or sugars. *Never feed your baby from the jar.* Put a small amount of food in a small dish and promptly refrigerate the unused food in the jar.

If you make your baby's food at home:

- Wash your hands often.
- Freeze any food that you will not use — *right away*.
- Avoid boiling fruits and vegetables. Bake or steam instead. This preserves vitamins, minerals, and nutrients.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital
to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.*



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889
10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

Revised 2017

