

Starting Solid Foods

-  Before your baby begins eating solid food, he or she must show signs of developmental readiness. Your baby must be able to sit up unsupported and have good control of the head and neck. Your baby also should show an interest in eating by opening his or her mouth when a spoon is introduced. Most babies are ready to start solids like iron-fortified infant cereal when they are 6 months old. Pureed fruits and vegetables may be offered at 6-8 months of age and pureed meats at 8 months. Keep in mind that formula or breast milk must be the main source of nutrition for the first year.
-  Start your baby with one new food at a time and wait three to five days before introducing the next new food. Begin with single ingredient foods such as rice, barley, oatmeal cereals, or pureed fruits and vegetables. Watch for signs of a food allergy or intolerance like skin rashes, wheezing, diarrhea, or vomiting. The foods that most often cause a reaction are cow's milk, citrus fruits, nuts, and egg whites. The current recommendations for starting these foods are:
 - ★ **Cow's milk, citrus, and egg whites:** 1 year old
 - ★ **Peanut/Nut Butters** (no whole or crushed nuts): 9 months old if no family history of allergy
Note: If your child has a milk allergy, eczema, any type of formula intolerance, or if there is a family history of a peanut/nut allergy, please consult your doctor prior to giving your child peanut/nut butters.
-  The most common and least allergenic cereal to start with is rice cereal. Mix one or two spoonfuls of cereal with enough breast milk or formula to make it look like thin gravy. The baby should be hungry, but not starving. Most babies will make a face and push the cereal right out again, so don't get discouraged! Soon your baby will become more accustomed to eating. The amount and thickness of the cereal can gradually be increased. After several weeks most babies eat cereal twice a day (totaling about ¼ to ½ cup.) Never force them to eat more food than they are willing to eat.
-  Once your baby has mastered cereal other new foods can be introduced. Begin with one or two spoonfuls of a single-strained or pureed vegetable or fruit such as squash, carrots, bananas, or applesauce. Gradually increase the amount of food to two to four tablespoons twice daily (about ¼ to ½ cup in total.)
Note: It is not unusual for the baby's stool to change color upon eating new foods.
-  By about 8 months old, most babies are ready for strained meat or poultry. Mixed foods may also be introduced at this time as long as your baby has had no reaction to any of the single foods in the mixture. Many babies are also ready to begin finger foods. Infants should be able to sit up straight in a chair, be able to grasp foods with their hands or finger tips, and move food from their hands to their mouths. Chopped pieces of ripe banana or dry unsweetened cereal (such as Cheerios®) are good choices.
-  By 12 months old most babies eat small tender table foods. Take extra care with foods that require extensive chewing or could cause choking if swallowed whole. Foods such as hot dogs, grapes, and raw carrots should be chopped up into small pieces. Whole cow's milk can be introduced in the range of 16-20 oz. a day. Children need the fat in whole milk for proper growth and development, so low fat milk should not be given until the age of two.