

Tips for Introducing Solids to Baby

When to start solids?

Current guidelines recommend waiting until baby is six months old since breast milk and/or formula provides all the nutrition the baby needs. Some pediatricians still recommend starting solids as early as four or five months. Make sure to speak with your pediatrician. Remember, even though you are introducing your baby to solids, your baby will still need breast milk or formula until baby is a year old.

How do I know if my baby is ready?

Some signs your baby is ready for solids:

- Ability to sit up and hold head up without assistance
- Interest in food (for example, your baby tries to grab your fork or spoon or stares at you longingly while you eat)
- Loss of tongue-thrust reflex – this reflex causes babies to push food or foreign objects immediately out of their mouth with their tongue. It helps prevent baby from choking early on. Between four and six months the reflex gradually diminishes

First foods

The good news is you don't have to start your baby on rice cereal. In fact, it may be better for your baby's health to start them with fruit and/or vegetables like:

- Avocado, pureed sweet potato, peas, green beans, and pureed fruit (like apricots or applesauce) and mashed bananas. They are jam-packed with nutrients your baby needs such as vitamin A, C, potassium and folate — not to mention fiber!
- If you choose to introduce a cereal, try baby oatmeal, which is more nutritious than rice cereal.
- All foods should be pureed or mashed until baby is 8 months old. Then try soft finger foods cut in very small pieces.
- Introduce new foods one at a time, with at least three days in between each new food. This way you will know if your baby has an allergic reaction to one of them. Signs of an allergy may include diarrhea, vomiting, a swollen face, wheezing or a rash. If there's a family history of allergies, or your baby develops an allergic reaction during this process, wait up to a week between new foods. Check with your pediatrician if you have any questions or concerns about which foods to introduce and when.

Thinking about making your own baby food? Here are some tips:

- **Preparation:** Steam, microwave, boil, or bake food, let it cool, and place in a blender or food processor to puree. If the puree is too thick you can always thin it out with water, breast milk or formula. If you choose to microwave, always do so in a microwave-safe dish (we recommend glass or CorningWare®). Note: Spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, oregano, etc., are okay to add to baby's food. Try not to add salt until baby is one year old or close to one year.
- **Storing:** Homemade baby food keeps in the refrigerator for two to three days. You can store it in zip-lock bags, BPA-free plastic containers, or glass containers. You can also make baby food and freeze it. Frozen baby food is safe to eat up to six months, but to retain its nutrient value it should be consumed within one to three months. You can store baby food in ice-cube trays, BPA-free plastic containers, glass containers, or zip-lock plastic freezer bags. If you freeze in ice-cube trays remove from trays after frozen and place in a zip-lock freezer bag. Each cube is about one ounce.