

## **When can my baby begin solid foods?**

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**Can he/she hold their head up?** Good head control is needed and being able to sit up in a high chair feeding seat or infant seat.

**Does your baby open his/her mouth when food comes toward them?** Babies may be ready if they watch you eat, reach for your food, and seem eager to be fed.

**Can your baby move food towards the back of his/her mouth?** If you try a spoon of rice cereal and it is spit out this may mean the baby is not ready to move it to the back of their mouth to swallow it. This is normal and may take getting used to. Start with watered down cereal and slowly increase the thickness.

**Is your baby big enough?** Generally a baby is ready for solid foods when the birth weight doubles (around 4 months) and they weigh about 13 lbs. or more.

## **What about breastfeeding and solid foods?**

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The AAP suggests breastfeeding as the sole source of nutrition for your baby for about 6 months. When you add solid foods to your baby's diet, continue breastfeeding until at least 12 months. Check with your baby's doctor about vitamin D during the first year.

## **How do I feed my baby?**

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Start with a half a spoonful or less and talk to your baby during feeding. Your baby may be confused and reject it altogether, just give it time. Every baby is different! Do not force your baby to eat solid food if they are not ready. When trying solids for the first time, give your baby a little breast milk and/or formula first, then switch to a very small half-spoonful of food and finish with more breast milk and/or formula. This will prevent your baby from getting frustrated when they are very hungry.

## **Which food should I give my baby first?**

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There is no medical evidence that a certain order of foods is best. Many pediatricians suggest vegetables first before fruits but you can try fruits at first. If your baby is breastfed, they may benefit from baby food with meat, which give the baby iron and zinc that are needed by 4-6 months of age. Check with your child's healthcare provider.

## **When can my baby try other foods?**

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Slowly add other foods one at a time and wait at least 2-3 days before trying another food. Watch for any reaction to the food such as diarrhea, rash, or vomiting. Tell your child's healthcare provider if this happens. Within a few months your baby's daily diet should include a variety of foods such as breast milk and/or formula, meats, cereal, vegetables, fruits, eggs, and fish. Have your baby eat with the rest of the family.

## **When can I give my baby finger foods?**

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Once your baby can sit up and seems able to bring foods to his/her mouth, you can try finger foods. To avoid choking make sure the food is soft, easy to swallow and cut into very small pieces. Good ideas are small pieces of banana, finely chopped chicken, soft cooked vegetables such as squash, peas, and potatoes, scrambled eggs, well cooked pasta, and wafer type cookies or crackers. At each daily meal your baby should eat about 4 ounces but do not overfeed if your baby does not want to eat that amount.

Try to avoid adult foods that have a lot of salt or preservatives. If using fresh foods cook until soft and do not add salt or seasoning. Refrigerate food that is not used and remember that there are no preservatives in fresh foods so do not use foods that have been in the refrigerator more than 1-2 days. AVOID hot dogs, nuts, seeds, grapes, popcorn, peanut butter, raw vegetables, chunks of fruit, and hard, gooey or sticky candy.

## **What about making my own baby food?**

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Spinach, beets, green beans, squash and carrots may contain nitrates, so it may be safer to use commercially prepared versions of these foods. Peas, corn, and sweet potatoes are safe to make at home.