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# Food for Baby's First Year

Most babies only need breast milk or iron-fortified formula for the first 4 to 6 months. If you feel your baby needs solid food before this, consult with your doctor. As you add solid foods, continue to offer breast milk or formula on demand. Babies will rely on breast milk or formula for its nutrition until the first birthday.

## Baby is ready for solid food if:

- Birth weight has doubled.
- Can hold own head up, steady and upright.
- Can sit with help.
- Shows interest in foods you are eating.
- Nurses more than 8 times a day or drinks more than 32 ounces of formula.
- Does not use the tongue to push food out of the mouth.

## How to Start

Here are some tips to remember to make the first feedings easier. Babies need practice and experience. Do not be discouraged if the feeding does not go as planned at first.

- Pick a time when both you and baby are in a good mood and she is not too tired or too hungry.
- Hold your baby on your lap or have the baby sit up in an infant seat.
- Start with rice cereal. This is easiest on the baby's stomach. A tablespoon mixed with 3 or 4 tablespoons of formula or breast milk is all you need at first. Keep the cereal very thin.
- Use a small spoon and put cereal only on the tip.
- If your baby does not seem very interested in eating off the spoon, let him smell and taste the cereal.

- If the baby has trouble swallowing, he/she may not be ready for solids yet. Wait a few days and try again.
- Feed the baby the same cereal for one week before changing to another flavor.
- Thicken the consistency of the cereal slowly over a period of several weeks.

## Moving On

After your baby is used to cereal, you can begin adding vegetables, fruits, meat, and bread. Offer a few tablespoons of vegetables or fruit in the same meal as the cereal. You will know when the baby is full when he leans back in his chair, turns his head away, refuses to open his mouth, or starts playing with the spoon. Here are some additional things to keep in mind:

- Try one new food at a time, for several days, to make sure the baby is not allergic to any foods.
- Stick to single foods first, then try mixed foods and dinners.
- When the baby starts getting teeth, add finely chopped or mashed foods. Texture helps sore gums.
- At 6 months, start offering juice in a cup only. Never put juice in a bottle. An infant, put to bed or naps with a bottle containing juice, is at risk for developing baby bottle tooth decay.
- If your baby will not eat a particular food, try it again later. The more you offer a food to a child, the better chance she has of liking it.
- Babies do not need sugar or salt added to their food.
- Do not limit the amount of fat in a baby's diet. Fat is needed for the brain to grow.

Ages for Introducing New Foods and the Amounts to Feed		
Age	Foods to Add	How Much to Feed
Birth to 4 months	Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula	Feed on demand as long as baby chooses
4 to 6 months	Baby cereal—rice first, then oatmeal or barley	1–2 tablespoons
6 to 8 months	Vegetables—strained, pureed, or mashed cooked	2–3 tablespoons
	Fruits—strained or mashed	2–3 tablespoons
	Fruit juice—using a small cup	3 ounces
	Meats—cooked and strained or chopped	1–2 tablespoons
	Dry beans—cooked and mashed	1–2 tablespoons
8 to 10 months	Cooked, mashed egg yolks	Allow baby to decide how much to eat. Do not encourage baby to eat more than he wants.
	Cottage cheese	
	Yogurt	
	Crackers or bread	
	Continue to offer new fruits and vegetables. Vegetables—cooked and in small pieces Fruits—soft and peeled, in small pieces	
10 to 12 months	Allow baby to eat the same foods the family is eating. Foods should be in small pieces and cooked or soft.	Allow baby to decide how much to eat. Do not encourage baby to eat more than he wants.

### Foods That Can Harm Your Infant

**Honey and corn syrup:** These foods can cause botulism, which can cause death in infants.

**Commonly allergic foods:** Egg whites, peanut butter, cow's milk, citrus fruits, and shellfish are common allergic foods that should be avoided in the first year, depending on how careful you want to be about certain allergies. Cow's milk should not be substituted for infant formula or breast milk because it does not supply enough iron and has too much protein for babies less than 1 year old.

**Sweet dessert foods:** Sweets promote obesity by adding food energy with few nutrients to support growth. Sugar alcohols, found in many reduced calorie sweet foods, may cause diarrhea.

**Food that may cause choking:** Hot dogs, candy, nuts, grapes, uncut meats, raw carrots and apples, and popcorn can get stuck in a baby's throat.

### Sources

Satter, E. (2000). *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense*. Palo Alto: Bull Publishing Co.

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