Food for Baby's First Year

Ana Claudia Zubieta, PhD; Director, Ohio SNAP-Ed; College of Education and Human Ecology; Department of Human Sciences; Ohio State University Extension; The Ohio State University

Signs That Baby Is Ready for Solid Food

• He/she can hold own head up, steady and upright.
• He/she can sit alone or with support.
• He/she shows interest in foods you are eating.
• He/she nurses more than 8 times a day or drinks more than 32 ounces of formula.
• He/she keeps tongue low and flat.
• He/she closes lips over a spoon and scrapes food off as a spoon is removed from mouth.
• He/she keeps food in mouth and swallows it rather than pushing it back out.

How to Start

Babies need practice and experience with first feedings. Do not be discouraged if the feeding does not go as planned at first. Here are some tips on getting started:

• Pick a time when both you and baby are in a good mood and baby is not too tired or too hungry.
• Hold baby on your lap or sit him/her up in an infant seat.

• Start with iron-fortified rice cereal. This is easiest on baby's stomach. A tablespoon mixed with 3 or 4 tablespoons of breast milk or formula is all you need at first. Keep the cereal very thin.
• Use a small spoon, and put cereal only on the tip.
• If baby does not seem very interested in eating off the spoon, let him/her smell and taste the cereal.
• If baby has trouble swallowing, he/she may not be ready for solids yet. Wait a few days and try again.
• Feed baby the same single-ingredient food for one week before changing to another food.
• After new foods, watch for adverse reactions such as rash, wheezing or diarrhea.
• Thicken the consistency of the cereal slowly over a period of several weeks.

Moving On

After 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 baby is full when he/she leans back in the chair, turns his/her head away, refuses to open his/her 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 baby is not allergic to the food.
• Stick to single-ingredient foods first, then try mixed foods and dinners.
• When baby starts getting teeth, add finely chopped or mashed foods. Texture helps sore gums.
• One hundred percent fruit juices can be offered to infants older than 6 months; however, juice should be limited to no more than 4–6 ounces per day. Juice should be offered only in a cup, not a bottle.

This fact sheet is a revision of the original, written by Lisa Pescara, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences.
• If baby will not eat a particular food, try it again later. The more you offer a food to a child, the better chance he/she has of liking it.
• Babies do not need sugar or salt added to their food.
• Do not limit the amount of fat in baby’s diet. Fat is needed for the brain to grow.

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 energy to foods with few nutrients to support growth. Sugar alcohols, found in many reduced-calorie sweet foods, may cause diarrhea.

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

### Resources


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Foods to Add</th>
<th>How Much to Feed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 4–6 months</td>
<td>Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula</td>
<td>Feed on demand as long as baby chooses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–6 months</td>
<td>Baby cereal—rice first, then oatmeal or barley</td>
<td>1–2 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–8 months</td>
<td>Vegetables—strained, pureed or mashed and cooked</td>
<td>2–3 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruits—strained or mashed</td>
<td>2–3 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% fruit juice—using a small cup</td>
<td>3 ounces or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meats—cooked and strained or chopped</td>
<td>1–2 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dry beans—cooked and mashed</td>
<td>1–2 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8–10 months</td>
<td>Cooked, mashed egg yolks, Cottage cheese, Yogurt, Crackers or bread</td>
<td>Allow baby to decide how much to eat. Do not encourage baby to eat more than he/she wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to offer new fruits and vegetables:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetables—cooked and in small pieces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruits—soft and peeled, in small pieces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–12 months</td>
<td>Allow baby to eat the same foods the family is eating.</td>
<td>Allow baby to decide how much to eat. Do not encourage baby to eat more than he/she wants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>