



Arlington Pediatrics, Ltd.

Starting Solid Foods

When to start and what are the signs that my baby is ready?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends starting solids around 6 months old. Your baby should be able to sit up mostly on their own and hold their head upright for long periods of time. Your baby should also show interest in food - such as watching their parents eat and making chewing movements with their mouth.

What foods do I start with?

We recommend you start with pureed foods, but what specific food is up to you! It's ok to start with fruits, vegetables, meats or cereals. If you are breastfeeding, it is important to start iron rich foods early on.

How do I start solids?

Start with a small amount, such as a tablespoon or less per feed to get your baby used to using a spoon and the new texture of solids. Give each new food for at least 3 days in a row to make sure your baby isn't allergic to anything. Try lots of different color foods and try warm and cold foods. Be patient and have your child be a part of family meal time!

What are signs of an allergy?

The most common sign is a rash called hives, or raised red itchy welt-looking bumps. Lip or face swelling can also occur, or more severe signs are trouble breathing or vomiting. Call APL right away and consider having Children's Liquid Benadryl (diphenhydramine) at home just in case. Call 911 if your child is having trouble breathing. If your family has a history of food allergies, talk to an APL physician about introducing certain foods sooner rather than later, and let's discuss the LEAP (Learning Early About Peanut allergy) study.

What about liquids?

Your breast milk or formula should still be your baby's main liquid for the first year of their life. It is ok to start a little water at 6 months. Practice washing down the solids with water and try all different types of cups (sippy, straw, open faced). Your baby shouldn't have more than 3-4 oz of water per day until they are consistently mobile and crawling. There is no need for juice - it is extra sugar and calories, and isn't healthy for your baby's teeth.

How will I know when my baby is done?

Look for cues such as closing his mouth, rejecting the spoon, or turning away. Never force your baby to eat more - eating should be fun and not a battle.

What should you avoid?

Avoid honey due to the risk of botulism. Avoid cow's milk until your child is 12 months old, but eating other dairy products is ok. All other foods are fair game! (Example - ok to try peanut and other nut butters, eggs, cheese, yogurt, meats, fish, shellfish, seasonings and spices). Avoid choking hazards such as grapes, raw carrots, hot dogs, nuts and popcorn.

How do I advance solids?

Start with one meal a day, then progress as tolerated once you have a handful of foods your baby has tried. Still continue the 3 day rule to look for allergies with new foods, but other meals can be foods your baby has tolerated. If your baby is using the pincer (two-finger) grasp or starting to crawl, let your baby start to feed herself (this varies, but around 8-10 months). It may be messy, but it will help them learn about different textures and will develop their fine motor skills!

Example Feeding Guide:

Example Menu	6-8 months*	8-10 months**	10-12 months
Breakfast	1-2 tbsp pureed fruit 1-2 tbsp infant cereal OR oatmeal OR pureed scrambled eggs (mixed with breast milk or formula) Try different nut butters one at a time (peanut, almond, cashew, etc)	1-2 oz grains (infant cereal OR cream of wheat OR toast) 1-2 oz protein (scrambled eggs, soft cheese, meat) 1-2 oz peeled/soft fruit wedges	2 oz grains (oatmeal, cereal, pieces of pancakes) 2 oz protein (scrambled eggs, peanut butter on cut up pieces of toast, cottage cheese) 2-4 oz fresh fruit pieces
Lunch	1-2 tbsp pureed protein (meat) 1-2 tbsp pureed veggie and/or fruit	1-2 oz protein (cooked beans or small tender pieces of meat/fish) 1-2 oz mashed or cooked veggies and/or peeled/soft fruit wedges	2-4 oz protein (cooked beans or lentils or ground beef) 2-4 oz cooked veggies and/or fresh fruit pieces
Dinner	1-2 tbsp pureed fish or beans 1-2 tbsp pureed veggie 1-2 tbsp grain	1-2 oz protein 1-2 oz veggies or fruits 1-2 oz grains (pieces of pasta or rice)	2 oz protein 2-4 oz cooked veggies and/or fresh fruit pieces 2 oz grains (noodles, rice, bread)
Snack	None	1 snack (yogurt, fruits, veggies, protein)	1-2 snacks per day (yogurt, fruits, veggies, protein)

*Start with 1-2 meals per day. Increase amounts as tolerated.

**Stage 3 crawlers or pincer grasp.

Sometimes as your baby's solid intake increases, their liquid intake may stay the same or decrease. Continue to breastfeed on demand. If you are formula feeding, your child's intake should be 24 oz or less by the time they are 12 months and ready to switch to cow's milk.

Resources:

www.healthychildren.org - Starting Solid Foods, Tips for Introducing Solid Foods