

Introducing Solid Foods to Infants

Research on timing of solid food introduction to infants is an ever-evolving field. The period between 4 and 6 months of age continues to be generally accepted as the optimal time to start, when considered from all angles (nutritional, developmental, allergic, prevention of diabetes and obesity, etc). Current research indicates that earlier, rather than later, introduction of allergenic foods may help to reduce the likelihood of food allergies. Here are some general guidelines for the process:

4 months

Introduce vegetables and/or cereal once daily

- Mash or puree avocado or cooked vegetables
- Only a few tablespoons; allow your child to “tell you” when he is finished
- Cereals (rice, oatmeal, barley) can be mixed with water, formula or breastmilk
- One new food per day - if rash or vomiting after a food, call our office

5 months

Add pureed fruits, and increase to twice daily (i.e. fruits in morning, veggies in evening)

- A word of caution about fruit and veggie “pouches” - while convenient, they aren’t fresh and they offer an unusual way of eating. Reserve use for travel and when convenience is a must.

6 months

Add in other pureed/mashed foods including beans, Greek yogurt, meats, eggs, grains

- Between now and 9 months, increase meals to three times per day
- Start giving tastes of water in sippy cup; tap water has fluoride to prevent cavities
- Baby can eat just about anything you are eating, as long as it is in pureed or mashed form
- Avoid added salt and sugar, and processed foods...think pure and fresh!
- Still off limits are honey and cow’s milk (but cheese and yogurt are OK)

8-9 months

When baby develops a pincer (fingertip) grasp, gradually introduce table foods for finger feeding

- Cubed tofu, scrambled eggs, soft cooked vegetables, small pieces soft fruits, grains
- Pieces should be small and soft enough to not be a choking hazard
- By 9 months, many babies are eating a combination of purees and finger foods
- Keep in mind that “puffs” sold as practice finger-foods are just that...good for practice (when your infant has mastered the art of finger-feeding himself, ditch the puffs for more nutritious “real food”)

12 months

By now baby should be eating a wide variety of foods mirroring an adult diet

- Only limitations are choking, otherwise nothing off limits
- Beware choking hazards until 3 years (nuts, popcorn, raw veggies, whole grapes, hot dogs)
- Avoid processed foods (chicken nuggets, packaged crackers, fruit snacks, hot dogs)
- Goal = wide repertoire of nutrition-packed foods (think beets, quinoa, lentils, deep leafy greens!)
- If on formula, transition to organic fortified (Vitamin D) whole milk in sippy cup, 12-24 oz daily
- If breastfeeding, add whole milk to diet in anticipation of eventual weaning