

Your Baby's First Year

The first year of life is a time of change! Most babies will go from breastmilk or formula all the way to table foods by their first birthday. Here are some guidelines, but keep in mind this is a general guide. Actual timing depends on your child's needs and readiness. Your baby's doctor can also help answer questions about feeding.

When should solid *baby* foods be added to the baby's diet?

- When your baby is about *4-6 months of age*, look for these *signs of readiness* to try solid baby foods: sits, watches the spoon, opens mouth for the spoon, and can swallow semisolid food.
- Breastmilk or formula provides all of the baby's nutrients needs. There is *no* need to add solid *baby* foods until the baby is 4-6 months of age or when the baby shows signs of readiness.
- Solid *baby* foods are not the same as adult foods or table foods. Foods such as mashed potatoes are soft, but are not prepared for your baby's sensitive digestive system. Use only commercially prepared *baby* foods or specially prepared (cooked, strained, unseasoned) homemade *baby* foods.

Why not add solid *baby* foods to my baby's diet before 4 months of age?

- Babies do not have eating reflexes until they are 3-4 months old. So, it is difficult for a baby to eat from a spoon. When a spoon touches the tongue, a young baby automatically pushes the food forward and out of the mouth. This is a reflex that may make feeding frustrating. *It's better to wait* until the baby is able to eat from a spoon more easily.

- Many babies under 6 months develop allergies easily. To avoid trouble with food allergies, wait until your baby is 4-6 months to try solid baby foods.
- Solid *baby* foods tend to be high in calories. Adding solid foods too early may result in an overweight baby.

Will solid baby foods help the baby sleep through the night?

- Research has shown that feeding solid *baby* foods to a baby in the evening does **not** help the baby sleep through the night.
- The infant has a small stomach, so nighttime feedings are important the first few weeks. By the time the baby can go six or seven hours without feedings, he will probably sleep through the night.






How many new foods should I give my baby at a time?

- Offer one new *baby* food at a time. If an allergic reaction occurs, you'll know what food caused it. Use each new *baby* food for four or five days, introducing no more than two per week.

Should I give cow's milk to my baby during her first year?

- **No!** Cow's milk has too much protein and sodium.
- Cow's milk is difficult for a baby to digest.
- Also, cow's milk protein has been linked to allergy problems.



AGE	FOODS	TIPS
Birth – 4 months 	Breastmilk or Iron-Fortified Infant Formula	Breastmilk is the <i>perfect</i> food for babies. The only supplements that may be needed are vitamin D, fluoride, and iron. If you choose to not breastfeed, give your baby iron-fortified formula. <i>Check with your doctor for more information.</i>
4 – 5 months 	Fortified Baby Cereals	Rice cereal is introduced first since it's least likely to cause an allergy problem. Then, introduce barley, oatmeal, or mixed grain cereal. Start with 1 tablespoon per day. Gradually increase to 1 tablespoon twice a day. Introduce only one new cereal at a time. <i>Never</i> put cereal in bottles or infant feeders because your baby needs to start learning to eat from a spoon.
6 – 7 months 	Vegetables, Fruits, Fruit Juice	Vegetables: Begin with strained vegetables. Offer 1 teaspoon of the vegetables and gradually increase to 1/2-jar each day. Fruits: Start with single, plain, strained fruit. Offer 1 tablespoon at a feeding. Gradually increase to 4 tablespoons, two times a day. Fruit juice: Offer a variety of infant juices (apple, pear, grape, or prune). Introduce the baby to drinking from an infant cup. <i>Wait</i> until the baby is 9-10 months old before offering orange, grapefruit, or pineapple. <i>Do not use fruit drinks or other drinks, such as soda pop.</i> These drinks will only give your baby unneeded calories, which may result in an overweight baby.
8 – 9 months 	Meats, Cooked Egg Yolk	Meat: Offer strained beef, beef liver, chicken, turkey, lamb, or pork (all baby foods). Start with 1 teaspoon, gradually increasing to 1 tablespoon a day. Cooked egg yolk: Mash the yolk of a hard-cooked egg with some formula, breastmilk, or fruit juice to moisten it. Offer 1 tablespoon. Slowly increase the amount. <i>Do not give the white of the egg until the baby reaches 10-12 months of age.</i> It may cause an allergic reaction.
10 – 12 months 	Variety	Expand the variety of fruits, vegetables, protein foods (meats, eggs, and milk products), breads, and cereals. Include an orange vegetable or a dark green vegetable at least three times a week. Try finger foods—banana slices, unsweetened cereals and crackers, fruit canned in juice, and cooked pieces of vegetables are best. <i>Go easy on sugary foods and desserts.</i> Your baby needs foods with nutrients, not sugar! Sugary foods spoil your baby's appetite.

Contributing Authors:

Elaine Bowen, *Extension Specialist - Nutrition Education*;
Guendoline Brown, *Extension Specialist - Nutrition and Health*;
Keith Hines, *WVU Dietetics Student Intern*;
Judith Bragg, *Extension Agent*;
Marjolyn Bryan, *Extension Agent*.

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