

Helpful Hints for Feeding Your Baby

Feeding your baby is one of the most important activities in your baby's life. Since it takes time and effort, it should be a source of great happiness in the life of both you and your child. Here are some helpful hints as you embark on this adventure!

Basic facts:

1. The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months of age as the optimal choice for most babies.
2. It is medically safe to start solids as early as 4 months if your baby is ready.
3. Studies have shown that solid foods do not help your baby sleep better than breastmilk or formula.
4. The earlier introduction of solids may be associated with digestive issues and childhood obesity.

Signs of readiness:

1. Your baby weighs at least 13 pounds and has doubled their birth weight.
2. Your baby sits with support, has control of head and body movements, and begins to chew on things.
3. Your baby has begun to show interest in solid foods. Your child begins to watch you and others as you eat.

Some tips when getting started:

1. The bottle should contain only fluids (milk, water). Any other food should be fed to your baby with a spoon. This teaches your little one to use his/her mouth and tongue correctly.
2. Babies should sit up supported in a chair when giving solid foods.
3. Feed solids with a spoon, preferably from a bowl, not the jar, and discard leftovers.
4. Babies do not need juice. The habit of sugared drinks leads to tooth decay and obesity.
5. Do not use cow's milk as a replacement for breast milk or formula during baby's first year. After the first birthday, substitute whole cow's milk. If your baby is on a special formula, check with us before changing over.
6. There is no need to add sugar or salt to your baby's food - they will eat the food without them.
7. The symptoms of food allergy/intolerance are stomachaches, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, wheezing, rash and/or irritability. If these are occurring, discontinue the last introduced food.

First Foods - Baby Cereal

1. Traditionally, between 4 and 6 months, a single-grain cereal is introduced first. Make sure it is iron fortified. Cereal is a good first food because its consistency can be adjusted for the baby as he/she learns to eat from a spoon. Try different

types of cereal- rice, try barley and oatmeal.

4. Begin with 1 tablespoon of dry cereal, thinned with 1 ounce of formula, breast milk or water. Keep in mind that some babies prefer their cereal like paste and some like it soupy. Experiment to figure out what thickness your baby prefers. If they refuse cereal moistened as above, they may enjoy it mixed with a fruit/vegetable baby food.
5. Once baby has adapted to the spoon, start a breakfast-dinner schedule by adding in more foods.

Second Foods - Fruits, Vegetables and Meats

1. Medical evidence shows that it does not matter which order you introduce solids. Make sure to add a variety of healthy fruits and vegetables into your child's diet.
2. Once your child has learned to eat one food, introduce one new food every 2 to 3 days to allow for any allergic reactions. **The introduction of eggs, peanuts products, sesame, wheat, soy, fish and shellfish are important early on and regularly, to reduce the risk of allergy. Exposure to a diversified diet, including allergenic foods, is important to establish in babies aged 6-12 months.**
3. If you are exclusively breastfeeding, your baby may benefit from meats that are rich in iron and zinc. These are safe to introduce as young as 4-6 months of age and are easily absorbed.
4. If you make your own baby food, please use vegetables that are commercially prepared that have been tested for nitrates. In general, spinach, beets, carrots, green beans, and squash can be too high in nitrates. Peas, corn, and sweet potatoes are not high in them.
5. In general, your child should eat 3-4 ounces of food per feeding of solids. For the first month, feed one meal per day of baby foods. Add a second feeding by the next month (breakfast-dinner schedule) and a third meal the following month. By 9 months of age, most babies are on a breakfast-lunch-dinner schedule in addition to breastfeeding or formula. If you are purchasing store brands of baby foods, your child will generally progress through stages 1, 2, and 3 easily, although some do not prefer stage 3. This stage does not have to be given in full before moving to the next step (finger foods).

Third Foods - Finger Foods

1. These are safe to feed once your baby can sit up and bring her hands to her mouth.
2. All food needs to be soft, easy to swallow and cut into small pieces.
Examples: diced steamed veggies, bananas, pasta, chopped chicken, turkey or fish, peas, potatoes, "graduate" jar foods, scrambled eggs.

Foods to Avoid Until Age 1 Year

1. HONEY can cause botulism in babies less than one year. We recommend avoiding it until then.

Special considerations at All Young Ages

1. HOT DOGS, POPCORN, WHOLE GRAPES AND NUTS are leading causes of choking in infants and toddlers and should be avoided. Avoid fish that could have bones.
2. SHELLED VEGETABLES such as corn and beans may be difficult to digest and can produce diarrhea.

Citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, grapefruits, strawberries, pineapples and tomatoes or their juices can sometimes cause rashes near the mouth or in the diaper area from skin being exposed to acids. This is not an allergic reaction. If this occurs, offer these foods in moderation as your baby tolerates