

## INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS TO YOUR BABY

The second half of the first year of life is exciting and fun. Your infant continues to rapidly grow and develop skills that make your baby a “real person”. One of the more exciting changes involves your baby’s diet, which changes from entirely breast milk or formula to a well balanced diet of table foods. Although many first time parents are anxious about how to introduce solid foods, the process can and should be fun for both you and your baby. The following guidelines are intended to provide concepts, helpful hints and some of the details you will need to help this process along.

### WHEN?

We recommend starting solids for most babies at 6 months. Some babies will need solids sooner.

### HOW FAST?

Introduce one new food at a time, adding a new food every 3-4 days or about 2 new foods per week. If you start solids well before 6 months, there is no need to add new foods this quickly.

### HOW MUCH?

Start with a small amount (1-2 tablespoons of cereal mixed with 1 ounce of formula or breast milk). Once your baby learns how to swallow cereal well, thicken the feeding up to about 3-6 tablespoons of cereal mixed with formula or breast milk per feeding. Gradually add more food as well as a variety of new foods until your baby is satisfied or loses patience. Never encourage your baby to “finish”. The baby may finish the meal with a bottle or breast until eventually solid meals replace bottle or breast feedings entirely.

### TIMING?

Start to “teach” the skill of swallowing solids from a spoon when your baby has an appetite, but isn’t starving and impatient (30 minutes before the baby usually feeds or after offering a small part of the bottle or breast feeding). Avoid times when your baby is exhausted or cranky. Mid-morning and mid-afternoon might be good times, but use your judgment about your schedule. Once your baby masters this new skill, solids can be offered at the time of a bottle or breast-feeding.

### HOW?

Use name brand baby foods or steam and puree your own foods. Use a serving spoon to place a small amount on your baby’s plate and use a baby spoon to feed your baby. You can refrigerate any food remaining in the jar for up to two days. Six-month-olds can usually sit comfortably in a high chair. Younger children should be inclined in an infant seat.

### WHAT?

Start with cereal (rice or others), move onto fruits, then yellow vegetables (carrots, corn squash, sweet potato) and green vegetables. If you are still offering only 2 meals by 7 months, this may be the right time to offer a third meal.

At about 8 months introduce meat, pasta and bread products. Offer these foods in small pieces (about the size of a Cheerio). Once your baby can tolerate small pieces, offer her/him cereal, fruits and vegetables in pieces. This is when we suggest offering more table food and less baby food. There is nothing more nutritious about jarred baby foods over home-cooked food. Jarred food is simply a more convenient way to have foods with the consistency that babies can tolerate when first starting solids. We recommend home cooked meats rather than jarred food and suggest moving from baby food right to soft pieces instead of using stage 2 and 3 foods when possible.

At about 12 months start whole eggs and whole milk instead of breast milk or formula. We also recommend waiting until this age to start berries, citrus fruits and fish. Honey and syrup should never be given before your baby is a year old.



**CUPS?**

At about 6 months, put 1-2 teaspoonfuls of water in a cup and offer it to your baby. Use a plain plastic cup without a lid. Be patient and continue to offer a cup so that your baby eventually gets accustomed to it.

**WEANING?**

As babies eat more, they usually begin to cut down on milk feedings. This usually happens once the baby has at least 2 meals a day. If that happens, follow your baby's lead. If not, stop one bottle every month or two, starting at 8 months. We recommend that your baby have the equivalent of 1-2 bottles by the time they are a year old.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

These guidelines are not rules. Be flexible. Don't measure food carefully. It's food, not medicine. Neither you nor your baby should find mealtime stressful. Relax, enjoy it and watch your baby enjoy mealtimes. As babies get older, they usually want to handle some of their own food. This is the way babies learn to feed themselves. At first, you will be feeding your baby and gradually, your baby will do more with your supervision and assistance. This may not be efficient or neat, but it makes mealtime more enjoyable. Take advantage of opportunities to have your baby join the family at mealtime. The social interaction and opportunity to imitate also make meals more enjoyable. Don't hesitate to call for additional advice.

**REMINDER!**

<i>LEAST ALLERGENIC FOODS</i>	<b>FOODS TO AVOID 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR OF LIFE</b>
CARROTS SQUASH PEARS APRICOTS APPLES BANANAS PEACHES BARLEY OATS RICE PLUMS	<b>EGG WHITE</b> CITRUS FRUITS TOMATOES YEAST WHEAT BERRIES NUTS CHOCOLATE SHELLFISH HONEY