



December 2006

## BABY'S FIRST FOODS

### When should I introduce solids to my baby?

Your baby will be ready to have their first solid foods when they are around 6 months old. Although breastmilk or suitable infant formula continue to be the most important source of nutrition for the first 12 months of life, introducing small amounts of solid food at this age is important for:

- Encouraging new experiences of taste and texture.
- Helping with speech, teeth and jaw development.
- Providing additional nutrients such as iron.

### How to start

**Time of Day:** Choose a time when your baby is alert and not too hungry, or too full.

**Position:** Until they are old enough to be able to sit comfortably in a high chair, have baby sitting, supported and upright in your lap.

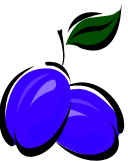
**Spoon:** Use a smooth, shallow spoon.

**Quantity:** Start with 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of a new food, gradually increasing with the amount daily until baby is taking 1 to 2 tablespoons of that food.

**One food at a time:** Continue with one food for at least 3 days before introducing another. This will allow you to pinpoint any food/s which may cause a reaction.

**Preparation of food:** Always wash your hands before preparing food and use clean utensils.

**Allow baby to enjoy the natural taste of fresh foods; there is no need to add extra salt or sugar**





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### What about.....?

**The Mess!!!?** Expect a mess. Newspaper or a plastic tablecloth under the high chair can help.

**Low Fat milk?** Low fat milks are not recommended in the first 2 years of life.

**Microwaves?** Be wary of unevenly distributed heat. Stir food well once removed from the microwave.

**Supervision?** Avoid small hard foods such as nuts and uncooked vegetables due to risk of choking. ALWAYS be with your baby while they are eating.

**If your baby wont eat?** Babies take a little while to learn to eat. If at first they spit the food straight out again, or are simply not interested, don't force it. Try again in a few days. It may take 5-10 attempts before a new food is accepted.

**Commercial baby foods?** Contain similar nutrients to fresh food and may be handy while travelling. However, these products are expensive and tend to contain several foods mixed together. (It is important that your baby learns to enjoy tastes and textures of individual foods).

**•Sweet drinks?** Fruit juices, cordials and soft-drinks are not recommended for infants. Water is the preferred choice.

### Stage I (around 6 months)

By this age your baby's swallowing ability, and tongue control are usually developed enough to eat smooth-textured food from a spoon. There's no need to start solids by putting food in the bottle! At 6 months drinking from a cup can be tried.

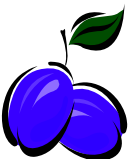
### Which new foods to give

**Cereal:** Rice cereal (mixed with expressed breast milk, infant formula or cool boiled water).

**Fruit:** Stewed apple or pear. Mashed banana, avocado.

**Vegetables:** Pumpkin, potato, carrot, zucchini.

**Texture:** Soft, smooth i.e.. pureed or finely mashed.





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## Stage II

Your baby will be starting to show more enthusiasm now they have progressed through stage one foods. They will enjoy putting food into their own mouth. Encourage this independence!! Even if no teeth have appeared yet, finger foods can be given.

### Which new foods to give

**Cereals:** Oat and wheat-based cereals. Rusks and pieces of toast.

**Fruit:** Sliced, soft fruit, e.g. banana.

**Vegetables:** Soft, cooked vegetables of all varieties.

**Meat:** Minced and finely chopped chicken, red meat and fish.

**Dairy:** Cooked custards, made with cow's milk. Yoghurt.

**Texture:** Your baby is learning to chew, so texture needs to become progressively lumpy. Start with small soft lumps, graduating to slightly larger pieces.

## Stage III (9 to 12 months)

By now, your baby is probably learning to grasp and bring foods to his/her mouth. S/he may also be reaching for, and learning to use, a spoon.

### Which new foods to give

**Cereals:** Whole grain breads.

**Eggs:** Eggs can be introduced between 10 and 11 months. (In the case of a family history of allergy, it is preferable to wait until at least 12 months of age).

**Dairy:** Cheese, cow's milk on cereal. After 12 months, cow's milk can replace breast milk or infant formula. At this age 600 ml per day is enough.

**Texture:** Family meals, cut into small pieces are appropriate now.

