

Introducing Solids Guide

The timing and method of introducing solids into a baby's diet (weaning) can have a profound effect on your baby's growth and development. Helping your baby become comfortable with solids, which eventually replace milk as their main source of nutrition, can allow your child to establish healthy eating patterns, and reduce their lifelong risk of obesity and allergies.



When you should introduce solids

World Health Organization **guidelines recommend exclusively breast feeding babies until they're 6 months, and continuing to offer breast milk while introducing solids to their diet.** Never introduce solids before your baby reaches 17 weeks of age.



Signs your baby may be ready for solids

At around 6 months of age, babies typically show signs they're ready to start trying solid foods, such as:

- They're hungry and restless after a milk feed.
- They can control the 'tongue reflex'.
- They can sit propped up in a sitting position with good head control.
- They imitate chewing motions when they see other people eating.



Tips for introducing solids for the first time

- Plan your first attempt for a day that suits you and your baby, at a time when you're both relaxed.
- Don't rush your baby. It takes time to learn how to swallow and adapt to new tastes.
- Use a soft teaspoon (e.g. silicone) to feed them, as it's gentler on teething gums.
- Babies may appear to 'gag' at first. Don't be alarmed, this is normal and part of learning to swallow.
- If your baby refuses a food, don't force it on them; stop, and try again in a few days.

Once you've successfully fed your infant a solid food, wait a few days before introducing the next one to give your baby time to adapt and become comfortable with different tastes and textures. It doesn't matter which order you introduce foods in, as long as they're iron-rich and nutritious, and prepared appropriately for your baby's developmental stage. Your baby requires **additional** iron from food once they reach 6 months of age as milk will not longer give the required amount and iron is essential for their healthy growth and development.



Getting Started

Weaning can be messy, but it should be a gentle and positive experience for both of you. Go slowly, observe your baby's reactions, and don't rush or pressure them.

Every baby embraces feeding differently, some will feed themselves enthusiastically, while others take longer to learn how to self-feed and enjoy solids.

Infants may need to be offered a food up to 10 times before they decide they like it (and most of it may end up on themselves or the floor!). It's all part of the learning process, so be patient.



Be a Role model:

Your baby watches your every move and expression, so show them how enjoyable, fun and engaging it can be when you try new foods. Encourage them to mimic you as you model all the sensations involved in experiencing a new food.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Breastfeeding is best for babies and a healthy diet is important when breastfeeding. A decision not to breastfeed can be difficult to reverse. Infant formula is suitable from birth when babies are not breastfed. It is recommended that all formula milks be used on the advice of a doctor, midwife, health visitor, public health nurse, dietitian, pharmacist, or other professional responsible for maternal and childcare and the social and financial implications should be considered. All preparation and feeding instructions should be followed carefully as inappropriate preparation could lead to health hazards.



Infant feeding guidelines can be found at www.health.govt.nz and www.nhmrc.gov.au

For more information, call our Dietitians and Nutritionists on the Careline free of charge **1800438500(Au)** or **080043850(NZ)**

How to Introduce Solids

6-8 Months

Your baby can hold their head up independently and sit propped up, indicating they're ready to try "chewing" or moving pureed and soft foods around with their tongue.

Fluids:

Continue breast feeding as long as possible – to support lifelong health. Offer breast milk (or formula if formula feeding) before solids. Water can be given in a cup but is often unnecessary while still breast feeding. Do not offer pasteurised full-cream cow's milk as a main drink; the main source of nutrition in this early stage will be breast milk (or formula).

Texture:

Mashed/pureed solids (with no lumps, skins, pips, seeds) help them become familiar with swallowing. Use a hand blender or fine sieve to remove any lumps.



Foods:

NO: Honey, cow's milk as a main drink.

YES: All other foods can be introduced from 6 months of age, provided they are not a choking risk.

How to Begin:

Start with small amounts of iron rich foods e.g. Fortified cereal, cooked and pureed fish, poultry, meat, well-cooked liver, vegetables, fruit and mashed hard boiled egg.

Offer small amounts after milk feeds (e.g. 1 teaspoon). It's important to offer a variety of foods, introducing them in any order to allow baby to try new tastes and get a range of different nutrients.

Don't avoid potential allergenic foods (e.g. mashed hard boiled egg, fish, peanut butter, dairy and soy products) unless your baby has a confirmed allergy. Early introduction is believed to protect against allergies. Aim to introduce all these foods by 12 months, offering them one at a time to help identify any reactions your child may experience.

8-12 Months

Your child can begin feeding themselves small pieces of soft /squishable finger food. Give them a small spoon to feed themselves, even while you're continuing to feed them most of their solids.

Fluids:

Offer solids before breast milk. Breast milk should still be offered as they transition to a solids-based diet.

Texture:

Introduce a mix of chopped and finger foods, they can hold/squish, so they can explore with their fingers and mouth and improve coordination and jaw strength.



Foods:

YES: Most foods, including allergen foods.

NO: honey, cow's milk as the main drink, added salt and foods high in saturated fat.

Ensure you've introduced all allergen foods by the end of this stage of development* Introduce a variety of flavours and foods to prevent fussy eating later on. Include a variety of colours of fruit and vegetables to ensure they're getting all the nutrients they need.

Approach:

Increase the serving of solids you're offering to 2-3 tablespoons at a time, giving them more meals throughout the day as your baby begins to eat and chew. Offer finger foods, ensuring meats, vegetables and fruit are soft and easily squished in their hands.

12 Months and over

Your child can begin to eat finely chopped up foods, as well as finger foods and family meals. Encourage independent feeding, and eating with the family.

Fluids:

Continue breast feeding for as long as it works for you and your child. Encourage drinking water in a cup. You can now introduce pasteurised full-fat cow's milk as a main drink (do not use reduced fat variants until at least 2 years old). Limit the amount of milk to 2 cups a day.

Texture:

Offer a variety of textures to encourage chewing and support the development of stronger jaw muscles needed for eating and talking. Take care with harder solids – choking is still a risk.



Foods:

YES: Foods from all five food groups, including plenty of variety.

NO: added salt, or added sugar to family meals

Approach: Give your child frequent, small servings of food from the five main food groups: vegetables and legumes, fruit, grains and cereals, lean meat or plant-based protein, and dairy foods.

Encourage them to try new foods and eat alongside the rest of the family to help them develop healthy eating habits.

General Tips for all ages:

Go slowly. Gradual introduction of different foods can make the transition to solids easier and help to identify any sensitivities or allergies in your child.

AVOID: Whole nuts, uncooked vegetables, or other hard foods that could cause choking.

- Do not offer sugar, honey, or raw egg.
- Avoid adding additional salt to your child's food.
- Minimise foods high in saturated fat and/or added sugars with low nutritional benefit.
- Any use of dairy milk alternatives should be discussed with your healthcare professional.
- Prepare and handle food in a clean environment to prevent food poisoning.
- Always keep a close eye on your child as they eat.

For more information call our Dietitians and Nutritionists on the Careline free of charge 1800438500(Au) or 080043850(NZ) email nutriciacareline@danone.com

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