

Introducing Solids

(Starts after 6 months)

Baby Food

In order to increase nutrition content, try making your own baby food. This may be more time consuming, but you can make large amounts a few times a month and freeze them.

Recipes!

Here is one example of a homemade recipe. For more, refer to wholesomebabyfood.com or momtastic.com

Apple Puree

Ingredients: 3-4 apples (Macintosh or gala) and cinnamon

Steps:

1. Prep: peel, core, and chop apples
2. Cook: place apples, cinnamon, and water in a medium saucepan and heat on medium-low for 12-15min
3. Puree: transfer to a food processor or blender until smooth
4. Serve or freeze for later use

Things to Remember

Your child isn't used to using their teeth to eat and may not even have teeth! Chewing comes from jaw strength and coordination. When beginning to introduce solids, make sure you mash or puree the foods into soft or very small pieces so that they are smooth and easier to eat. Be patient! It may take time for your child to get used to these new foods and textures.

Preparing Your Own Baby Food

In order to do this, you will need some of your own kitchen tools. Some of these include:

1. Blender/food processor: for pureeing, mashing, and blending foods.
2. Ice cube trays: for storing baby food in the freezer until you're ready to serve them.
3. Stainless-steel steamer: for steaming fruits and vegetables. Usually, these are only about \$5.
4. Fork/masher: for mashing fruits and vegetables.

Preparing your own baby food allows parents to be more creative with texture and branch out from the normal level of texture in store-bought baby food which tends to be extremely smooth.

As your child gets used to these soft, pureed foods, they will then be able to move onto thicker or chunky foods. Remove any skin and/or hard pits from the center of fruits and remove seeds when preparing your own baby food. When introducing harder fruits or vegetables, cook them to make them softer. It is important to remember that if your child is eating cereals, it is recommended to offer different times of fortified infant cereals like oat, barley, and multigrain in addition to rice cereal.

Order of Introduction

While there is no correct order in which you should introduce foods to your child, start with vegetables instead of fruits. After beginning to eat solids at around 6 months of age, your child can begin eating a variety of foods from different food groups when they are around 7-8 months old. Many pediatricians recommend introducing dairy, like yogurt and cheese, around 8 months of age and meat around 7-9 months of age. When introducing solids, start with one at a time and introduce additional foods gradually after three-five days. Drinking cow's milk or fortified soy milk is not recommended until your child is older than 12 months.

Additional Strategies

Baby-led weaning: The idea behind this is for the parent or caregiver to follow the baby's lead as they are introduced to new foods. This helps support children developmentally and allows them to feed themselves rather than being spoon-fed by an adult. Babies are usually ready to try baby-led weaning when they are about 6 months old have the motor skills to sit up by themselves and reach out to grab things. For more information, refer to babyledweaning.com.

Softening ideas: Try cooking fruits and vegetables to make them soft enough for babies to chew. An easy trick for this can be to use vegetables from a soup. This makes the food as soft and as easy to eat as possible.

*We recommend that you always check with your baby's pediatrician/healthcare provider before introducing solids.

Chewing

Introducing solids comes with teaching children how to chew. Here are some strategies for this:

- Initiate oral motor movement "yayaya" to show your child how to chew
- Eat in front of your child and have them watch
- Present different temperatures and textures of foods such as dissolvable cheerios and soft small pieces of banana. Present different temperatures of puree and/or refrigerate spoon to practice
- Teach your child the vocabulary around chewing such as "where are your teeth?" and "where is your tongue?"
- Offer new foods from your own plate to see if the baby will become more interested in trying a new food.

These techniques will help your child become more comfortable when starting to chew on solid foods.

Family Time

- Meal times are not just about providing your baby with important nutritional support, but it's also about supporting their oral motor, skills, fine motor skills, as well as their social-emotional development.
- Meal times are social times when you and your baby, family, and loved ones are together and learning about each other.
- It is important to have regular family meal times. When this starts early in life it becomes the normal pattern.