Weaning, Starting Solid Foods

WHEN TO START

Start solid feedings for your infant when your child's caregiver recommends it. Most experts suggest waiting until:

- Around 6 months.
- Your child's muscle skills make it safe to start solids. Some of the things that show you that your baby is ready to try solid foods include:
  - Being able to sit with support.
  - Good head and neck control.
  - Placing hands and toys in the mouth.
  - Leaning forward when interested in food.
  - Leaning back and turning the head when not interested in food.

STARTING SOLID FOOD

When your baby is old enough and physically ready, you can begin giving your baby his or her first tastes of food. Choose a time when you are both relaxed. Right after or in the middle of a normal feeding is a good time to start. Do not try when your baby is too hungry. At first, some of the food may come back out of the mouth. Babies often do not know how to swallow solid food at first. Your child may need practice to eat solid foods well.

Start with rice or other single grain infant cereal with added vitamins and minerals. Start with one or two teaspoons of dry cereal. Mix this with enough formula or breast milk to make a thin liquid. Begin with just a small amount on the tip of the spoon. Over time you can make the cereal thicker and offer more at each feeding. Add a second solid feeding as needed. You can also give your baby small amounts of pureed fruit, vegetables and meat.

Some important points to remember:

- Solid foods should not replace breast or bottle feeds.
- First foods should always be pureed.
- Additives like sugar or salt are not needed.
- Always use single ingredient foods so you will know what causes a reaction. Take at least three or four days before introducing each new food. By doing this you will know if your baby has problems with one of the foods. Problems may include diarrhea, vomiting, constipation, fussiness, or a rash.
- Do not add cereal or solids to your baby's bottle.
- Always feed solids with your baby's head upright.
- Always make sure foods are not too hot before giving them to your baby.
- Do not force food on your baby. Your baby will let you when he or she is full. If your baby leans back in their chair, turns their head away from food, starts playing with the spoon, or refuses to open up their mouth for the next bite, they have probably had enough.
- Some foods may make your baby's stool hard. If some foods cause constipation (like rice cereal, bananas, or applesauce), switch to other fruits or vegetables, oatmeal or barley cereal.

FOODS TO AVOID

- Honey can cause botulism in babies under a year old. Avoid honey.
- Cow's milk under the age of 1 year.
- Foods that have already caused a bad reaction.
- Choking foods such as grapes, hot dogs, raw carrots and other vegetables, nuts, candies, etc.

Go very slow with foods that are common causes of allergic reaction. If you start these foods, begin with a just a taste. If no reactions after a few days, try again in gradually larger amounts:

- Shellfish.
- Eggs and egg products such as custard.
- Nut products.
- Cow's milk and milk products.

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