



TIPS FOR INTRODUCING SOLIDS

For ease of reading the female gender has been used throughout. This brochure provides a brief guide to introducing solids.

Starting solids is an interesting and exciting time for your baby. Initially, solid foods add little nutrition to your baby's diet. It is a chance to experience new flavours and smells, to feel different textures and temperatures with their mouth and hands and to discover that food comes in different colours, shapes and sizes. It should be a time for fun and to experiment.



WHY WAIT UNTIL 6 MONTHS?



The National Health and Medical Research Council (NH & MRC) recommends starting solids from around 6 months of age. Until this time the nutritional



needs of your infant will be met by breast milk or infant formula. Starting solids too early can put stress on your baby's body and lead to problems such as:

- Digestive difficulties which can cause pain, constipation and/or irritability
- Reduced number of breast or bottle feeds (this can lead to poor nutrition and growth)
- Allergies and food intolerances

HOW TO KNOW IF SHE IS READY FOR SOLIDS

When you see the following behaviours, at around 6 months, she is showing that she is developmentally ready to start solids.

- Has enough head and neck control to turn her head.
- Shows interest when other people eat.
- Stops pushing her tongue forward when trying to eat.
- Brings items to her mouth with her hands to try to suck/eat them.
- Can sit with support.
- Reaches out to grab food or spoons.
- Opens her mouth when food is offered.



SIGNS BABY IS NOT READY OR SHE IS NOT INTERESTED AT THE TIME

- Pushing food from her mouth with her tongue.
- Closing her mouth tightly and/or turning her head away.
- Pushing the food away.
- Fussing.

FOOD SAFETY

- Always stay with your baby at meal time.
- Wash your hands before you prepare food and before feeding your baby
- Never add solids to your baby's bottle
- Always check food temperature to prevent burning her mouth. Your baby cannot eat hot food.
- Always give the food a good stir before testing the temperature. Using a microwave to heat your baby's food may result in hot spots.
- Ensure your baby is sitting and well supported when eating.
- Only start one new food at a time in case your baby has a reaction to it – reactions include a rash, vomiting, behavioural change, bowel problems, stomach pain or swelling of the skin.
- Never force your baby to eat – if she turns away try again later.
- Avoid tough skinned or hard foods.
- To avoid food poisoning, throw away any uneaten food left over from her meal – never reheat and use again.

HOW TO START SOLIDS

- Choose a time of day that suits you and your baby (when she is happy and interested).
- Offer your baby her milk about 20 minutes before the solids as the milk provides the majority of her nutritional requirements.
- Start with a sloppy texture.
- Rice cereal, fortified with iron, is a good food to begin with. It is soft, easily, digested, can be mixed to a texture your baby can cope with and provides a little extra iron.
- Use a small spoon that has smooth rounded edges.
- Start by offering only 1 teaspoon per day. As she gets used to this, increase the amount, number of times per day and the variety of foods until she has 3 solid meals each day. The amount of solids should not be so much that she refuses her next milk feed.



- It may take many tastes before your baby eagerly accepts a new flavour. Do not force her – try again in a few days.
- Once she is eating the sloppy food easily, thicken the texture to a paste. Gradually continue to thicken food until by about 7-9 months when she is able to tolerate lumpier, thicker textured food.

REMEMBER: Teaching your baby to cope with lumpier food and to learn to chew is important. It will help develop her facial muscles, which are essential when she is learning to speak.

WHAT ABOUT DRINKS?

- Offer drinks of cool boiled water from six months of age.
- Encourage your toddler to use a feeder cup (or a lidded cup).
- When using a feeder cup, water is preferred to sugary drinks such as fruit juices. Avoid all soft drinks.



FOOD PREPARATION

- Feedings bowl and spoons do not need to be sterilised – just wash in hot soapy water and rinse well.
- Water, breast milk or formula can be used to mix with rice cereal to the correct texture for your baby.
- Fruit and vegetables may be cooked in the same way as your food – steamed, boiled or microwaved.

REMEMBER: Your baby’s taste buds are more sensitive than yours. Therefore she does not need salt, sugar or any other flavour enhancers to enjoy her food.



FOOD SUGGESTIONS

FIRST FOODS – AROUND 6 MONTHS

The first food given to your baby need to be easy to digest, high in iron and unlikely to cause allergies. The consistency is smooth, soft and/or finely mashed.

Milk & Dairy Main source of nourishment (an average of 5 breast feeds or bottles/day)	Breast Milk or infant formula
Cereal	Iron fortified rice cereal

Fruit Fruit that can be made into a fine mash or soft texture	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diced soft fruit (e.g. peach, mango, kiwi, pear, avocado, ripe banana) • Soft cooked apple, pear, peach, apricot
Vegetables Cooked vegetables that can be made into a fine mash or soft texture	Examples: Potato, sweet potato, pumpkin, carrot, zucchini, marrow
Fats & Oils	It is not necessary to add oils, butter or margarine to food prepared for baby.

AROUND 7 MONTHS PROGRESS TOWARDS THICKER LUMPIER FOODS AND TEXTURES

Once she is tolerating soft pureed food and a variety of vegetables, it is time to increase the texture and start to offer lumpier food. This is also the time to introduce meats into her diet.

The consistency around 7 months is soft, mashed, thicker and a course texture. At 8-9 month, minced, grated and diced Finger foods can be added.

She will like to try to feed herself. Finger food is good for this. When you spoon feed her, give her a spoon to hold for her to practice.



When possible have your meal with her as she will enjoy the company and will learn about the social contact that occurs at meal times.

Milk & Dairy Main source of nourishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or infant formula • Yogurt (full fat), custard, white sauce, Grated cheese, cottage cheese
Cereal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice cereal/Mixed baby cereal, rolled oats, semolina, sago • Bite sized bread/toast pieces (white or wholemeal), rusks, past, macaroni, rice

Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mashed stewed fruit (e.g. apple, pear, peach, apricot, prunes) • Ripe or lightly cooked fruit, diced or grated, so she has to chew and can begin to feed herself. • Grated apple and ripe banana pieces
Vegetables Offer moist, lumpier textures so baby has to chew and can begin to feed herself	Diced soft cooked vegetables (e.g. potato, sweet potato, carrot, pumpkin, zucchini)
Meat, Fish, Poultry, Eggs & Legumes (Beans & Lentils) Offer moist, lumpier textures so baby can chew the food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tofu • Minced beef, lamb, pork, poultry, liver pate • Flaked or canned fish • Mashed hard boiled egg yolk • Mashed, cooked legumes (e.g. soybeans and lentils)
Fat & Oils	Use only a small amount of margarine or butter on bread or toast

AROUND 9-12 MONTHS PROGRESS TOWARDS THE FAMILY DIET

To help your child learn to eat the family foods she will need practice. Offer her a variety of foods and textures. You can start to offer her food before her milk. A variety of different textures (e.g. mashed, diced, grated) is important. Encourage her to feed herself by offering finger foods and a spoon.

Milk & Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or three servings of infant formula to continue as her milk drink. • Full fat dairy foods (e.g. custard, cows milk on cereal), cheese sticks
Cereal Avoid sugar or bran cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheat based breakfast cereals • Toast pieces with a scrape of margarine or butter • Variety of breads (e.g. wholemeal and white, small sandwiches (e.g. cheese, cream cheese, tuna and mayonnaise) • Rice – white or brown, pasta, couscous

<p>Fruit Offer a variety of cooked and ripe fresh fruit. Offer fruit that has a stronger flavour and firmer texture</p>	<p>Orange or mandarin segments (membrane removed), pineapple pieces, seedless grapes cut in half, rockmelon, watermelon, strawberries</p>
<p>Vegetables Continue to offer a variety of diced, grated and mashed vegetables. Offer some vegetables that have a stronger flavour</p>	<p>Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, capsicum, tomato, cucumber, mushrooms, carrot, cabbage, sweet potato, potato, pumpkin, carrot</p>
<p>Meat, Fish, Poultry, Eggs & Legumes (Beans & Lentils) Continue to offer meat/poultry/fish that is tender, moist and easy to chew</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sliced/diced meats, • Fresh and canned fish • Mashed hard boiled egg yolk • Tofu • Canned baked beans • Family meals low in salt and spices

FROM 12 MONTHS

By 12 months your baby should be eating similar meals to the family. Make sure meals are not salty or contain large amounts of sugar. Gradually substitute formula with full fat milk as her main milk drink offered after solid food.

For further information on feeding toddlers see the Karitane Toddler Nutrition information booklet.



COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS

Commercial baby foods can be convenient and nutritious but can also be more expensive than home cooked foods. Commercial foods often have similar textures. If she is continually given commercial foods she may refuse to eat home cooked meals. When buying commercial baby foods, look for the label with 'No Added Salt', 'No Added Sugar' and buy the age appropriate variety for your baby.

UNSUITABLE FOODS

Some foods are not suitable to feed to babies and young children these include:

- Honey
- Nuts/nut products
- Tea and other foods that contain caffeine
- Spicy, sugary or highly salted food
- Very hard or very hot food

ALLERGIES & INTOLERANCES

If you have a family history of allergies, or you concerned about allergies, seek medical guidance before starting solids. Introducing solids too early can result in food allergy or intolerance because your baby's immune system is not yet mature enough.

REMEMBER

- Babies and toddlers will make a mess when feeding. Feeding herself is part of the learning process and mess is to be expected.
- Introduce a soft toothbrush as soon as teeth appear and gently clean the teeth with water only.



If you have difficulty with feeding your baby or at any other time you require help please consult:

- Child & Family health Nurse
- General Practitioner
- Karitane Careline on 1300 CARING (1300 227 464)
(TTY (02) 9794 1848 for hearing impaired)



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References available on request

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