



Breastfeeding & *Solids*

CLS

The Corporate Lactation Services
Newsletter

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EXCITING TIME FOR YOU & YOUR BABY

by Jenny Bowen, RN, IBCLC, CIMI, Feb., 2018

You have made it through the first months of providing your baby with the gift of your milk! What a wonderful accomplishment!

For the first 6 months of your baby's life, your milk is all your baby needs. The World Health Organization, UNICEF, American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Family Physicians all recommend that babies are exclusively breastfed (no cereal, juice or any other foods) for the first 6 months of life.

Most babies are ready developmentally and their tummies are mature enough for solids between 6 and 8 months of age. If your baby was born early (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or has any medical condition which might affect their ability to handle food safely or to digest a range of foods, you are advised to discuss starting solids with your baby's health care team.

From six months of life through your baby's first birthday and beyond, your milk continues to play a very important role in your baby's nutrition as well as immune protection. Solid foods during the first year are meant to complement your milk, not replace breastfeeding. The focus of solids is a way to add textures to your baby's diet, allow your baby new experiences and to help develop hand/eye coordination with finger feeding.

HOW OFTEN AND HOW MUCH SOLIDS SHOULD I FEED MY BABY?

Your baby will begin eating solid foods according to his/her unique timetable, just as your infant will walk and talk when ready. Readiness to try new foods is just another developmental step and it isn't necessary for you to do anything special. Typically, a baby's swallowing mechanism and gastrointestinal (GI) tract are not mature enough to handle solid foods until about 6 months or later.

Sometimes parents are told that starting solids will help baby to sleep at night. In reality, sleeping through the night is a developmental event that parents may not be able to change by feeding baby solids in the evening. Adults with restless sleep often find that a light snack such as warm milk helps them sleep at night. Typically, they do not choose a heavy meal that could cause indigestion. Warm milk contains sleep inducing agents that help people fall asleep. So, human milk for your baby is the ideal food to encourage baby to sleep.

One of the most important signs of readiness to start solids is the ability to sit up unsupported. Once your baby can do this, see if they pick up food from your plate and put it in their mouth. The loss of tongue thrusting reflex that causes food to be pushed out of your baby's mouth is another indication that your baby is ready to expand the taste experience.

HOW OFTEN AND HOW MUCH SOLIDS SHOULD I FEED MY BABY?

Introduce solids very gradually to your baby. Some babies like other foods right away and other babies take a while to warm up to the idea.

A few bites once a day is enough at the beginning.

It is ideal to offer the solids about an hour after breastfeeding. If nursing has come before the solids you can continue feeding your baby the solids until he/she shows signs of fullness such as turning head away, closing his/ her mouth, batting at the spoon, wanting down, spitting the food out etc. Most babies will balance their milk intake with their solid food intake well if you feed this way.

When your baby is 7 - 9 months of age, you may increase solids if your baby is interested to a maximum of 2 meals per day. Continue to nurse beforehand if possible and follow with the solids. Your milk still provides about 75% of your baby's total energy per day.

At 9 -12 months, watch your baby's cues and you may increase solids if your baby is interested. At this point, babies are often eating solids three times a day with some small snacks. Your milk provides about 50% of your baby's total energy during this period of time.

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I FEED MY BABY?

Good nutrition for children applies equally to young babies. Thus, 'fast foods' and foods with added sugar and salt should be avoided.

The type of food the baby receives depends on the child's age, the preferences of the parents or pediatrician and the baby's willingness to accept them.

Many parents are beginning to first introduce vegetables, fruits and meats, in that order, rather than cereals. This leads to feeding foods that are high in energy, iron and vitamin C (to help iron absorption). Some examples are avocado, banana, fresh fruits such as pears and applesauce. Give fist sized chunks of lightly cooked broccoli, cauliflower, sweet potato, squash and carrot. This may be followed by protein-rich meat such as chicken or turkey cooked until tender and offered as a large piece to be explored and sucked or you may puree the meat.

AT 9 to 10 months, parents often begin introducing foods such as whole grain breads and cereals (use your milk to mix in the cereal), beans/lentils (that are soaked, cooked and mashed), yogurt, cottage cheese, egg yolk and other meats such as lamb. At this age, babies are often using their thumb and forefinger to pick up small sized pieces of finger food and trying to use feeding utensils.

Although it is exciting to try a variety of different foods with your baby, be sure to proceed slowly using only single ingredients and waiting a few days to a week between introducing each new food. Then, if something upsets your baby's stomach, you will know exactly what it was.

To minimize the risk of allergies, it is a good idea to wait until your baby is at least a year old before introducing citrus fruits (including

oranges, lemons and grapefruit), peanuts and peanut butter, egg whites, soy products (including soy milk and tofu), seafood and whole cow's milk. Since the research is mixed on when to introduce allergenic foods, if there is a family history of food allergy, consult your doctor or allergist for advice on when to start your baby on the more-allergenic foods.

Consider preparing your baby's food at home. Foods prepared at home are not only more wholesome and nutritious but cost less than commercially prepared baby foods.

Honey is not recommended until your child is 1 to 2 years of age because of the risk of botulism spores.

CAN I GIVE MY BABY WATER?

Once you are giving solids, offering water is a good way to help your baby begin to use a cup. Your baby still needs the calories from your milk, so limit the amount of water in a cup to no more than 2 ounces in 24 hours to avoid your baby filling up on water and not taking enough breast-milk. Your breast-milk continues to provide plenty of water for your baby.

Juice is not necessary for baby's nutrition. If you offer juice, limit to sips from a cup with meals and introduce it gradually just like any new food. It is best to dilute juice with water and limit total amount your baby drinks to about 3 - 4 ounces per day.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Allowing your baby to set the pace at each meal and maintaining an emphasis on play and exploration rather than on eating, enables the transition to solids foods to take place as naturally as possible.

Many parents worry about their baby choking. It is found that babies are at less risk of choking if they are in control of what goes into their mouth than if they are spoon fed.

So, a baby that is struggling to get food into his mouth is probably not quite ready to eat it. Your baby should always be fed in an upright position to ensure that food he/she is not yet able to swallow (or does not wish to swallow) will fall forward out of his mouth.

Certain foods are a choking risk for children under three years of age, including whole grapes, whole cherry tomatoes, popcorn, large amounts of peanut butter and any food that could break off in large chunks such as raw carrot, hard apple or celery sticks.

Nuts are a choking risk up to age five years. Never leave your baby alone with food or when he/she is eating.

Holding off until 6 months for introducing solids is not only beneficial to baby, but also to mom.

A well planned vegetarian diet can be appropriate. The biggest concern is obtaining sufficient amounts of vitamin B 12. The guidelines for the introduction of solid foods are the same as for other infants. Protein-rich foods can include tofu, legumes, soy or dairy yogurts, cooked egg yolks and cottage cheese.

Holding off until 6 months for introducing solids is not only beneficial to baby, but also beneficial to mom. Research shows that mothers who exclusively breastfeed for 6 months versus 4 months have a longer duration of lactational amenorrhea which is the natural postpartum infertility due to breastfeeding. It is also noted that mothers have a more rapid postpartum weight loss if they breastfeed longer.

Sometimes the increase in saliva that your baby is making can irritate your nipples.

Also, there may be food particles in your baby’s mouth. You may find rinsing your nipples with water after feeding may help.

Remember that feeding times are periods of learning and love. Talk to your baby during feeding with eye to eye contact and enjoy this new phase of your baby’s life!

SUPPORT

Every new milestone brings new excitement as well as some new challenges. Be ready to adapt, along with your baby. Enjoy the unique aspects of each phase and reach out for information, education, and support when you need it. For breastfeeding concerns, call your lactation consultant at 888-818-5653. If an unexpected problem comes up, a lactation consultant is even on call each day, at Extension 110.

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Contact us!

My Lactation Consultant's name & number are:
