

Beginning Solid Foods

Timing varies greatly from one baby to another, and it's always better to wait to give baby foods rather than rushing. If you introduce solid foods too early, your baby is more likely to have allergic reactions. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests waiting until your baby is 4 to 6 months old to begin solid foods. Your baby's skills will let you know when it's time to begin solid foods.

One of the biggest milestones for your baby will be starting solid foods. Here's a guide to help you with your baby's first bites:

Breastmilk or formula—still the main dish... Breastmilk or formula is recommended as the main source of a baby's nutrition for the first year, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Infant cereal, such as Rice Cereal, is usually the first food introduced to infants. It's made with mild ingredients, and its smooth, fine texture is just right for your baby's first solid food. Plus, Rice Cereal is made with natural grains and is easy to digest.

Timing ...Beginning solids *around 6 months* happens along with two events: Your baby's iron stores go down and her body's ability to eat simple, pureed foods. Readiness for solids is what you can see—her ability to sit up, take, and swallow food from a spoon—as well as what you can't see. When will you know the timing is right? Be sure to talk with your pediatrician and use our checklist "Is your baby ready for solid foods?"

Importance of iron...Most pediatricians recommend starting with an iron-fortified cereal. Infant cereals have iron in them and will help rebuild your baby's naturally decreasing iron stores. Iron is important for physical growth and mental development. It also helps prevent iron deficiency anemia and is part of hemoglobin that carries oxygen in the blood from the lungs to every cell in the body.

Start with single grains...Single-grain cereals are a good way to check for food allergies. Start by giving Rice cereal first. If your baby does not have a problem with the Rice cereal, you can give Oatmeal cereal. So give them a try, but be sure to wait about 5-7 days between each cereal to see how your baby does with it. Watch for allergic responses such as diarrhea, rash, or vomiting. If any of these occur, do not give any more of the food and call your pediatrician.

Your baby's first solids should be thin like runny milk. Mix 1 tablespoon of cereal with 4 to 5 tablespoons of breastmilk or formula to thicken it until it is like soup.

Always use a spoon and not a bottle when feeding solids. It's important that your baby gets used to sitting up, taking bites from a spoon, resting between bites, and stopping when she's full. Once she gets used to eating cereal, you can feed it more often and start to make the texture thicker. **Resources: Gerber website and Nancy Cuba-Lawrence Co. WIC Nutritionist** R-062910 mkm Word; Mkm R-120108; 110508

Ready for Solids Quiz

Child Name _____ Age _____ Date _____

To determine if your baby may be ready for solid foods, take this quiz:

Is your baby four months or older?

Yes No

Does your baby weigh twice as much as he/she did when he/she was born?

Yes No

Does your baby drink 32 ounces or more of breastmilk or formula each day?

Yes No

Can your baby sit up with only a little support?

Yes No

Does your baby turn his/her head away when he/she is full & finished with the bottle?

Yes No

Does your baby put things in his/her mouth a lot of the time?

Yes No

Does your baby watch as you eat or open his/her mouth and lean forward for a bite?

Yes No

Does your baby nurse more than 8 times a day?

Yes No

Parent Signature _____

To be completed by EHS Home Visitor:

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The following concerns have been identified:

Plan of action:

Home Visitor's Signature: _____

Reviewed by: _____ Date: _____