

NUTRITION AND FEEDING GUIDELINES: FOUR TO TWELVE MONTHS

Providing food for your baby that is healthful as well as age appropriate is a rewarding aspect of parenting. In the next few months your baby will progress from a diet consisting of all breast milk or formula feedings to one that includes solid foods. As the first bite of food goes into his mouth, the weaning process has begun, though it will take months to complete. As your baby starts to consume solid foods, you have the opportunity to start your baby on a lifetime of good eating habits.

You may encounter well-meaning friends, relatives and neighbors, with lots of advice on how, when, and what to feed your baby. We are providing you with suggestions in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics. In addition to your own good sense, your child will provide you with clues as to what and how much to feed him.

How will I know when my baby is ready for solid foods?

You do not need to be in any rush to get your baby started on eating solid foods. Contrary to popular belief, studies have shown that starting cereal early will not help your baby through the night. It is easier, more convenient, and possibly cheaper (especially if breastfeeding) to delay introduction of solid foods until five to seven months, as milk, either formula or breast milk, should be the major source of nutrients during the first year of life. A typical amount of milk consumed around four months is either 4 to 7 feedings a day of breast milk, or 26 to 40 ounces of formula a day.

Medical studies have shown a higher incidence of food allergies in babies started on solid foods at a younger age. If you have a strong family history of food allergies, you should consider waiting a few more months to start solid foods or avoid the highly allergenic foods. Also, babies who are fed too much solid food, in addition to their milk, start gaining weight much faster than usual which may lead to obesity later in life. Remember that a fat baby is not necessarily a healthy baby.

When you finally do start solid foods, you may want to give him part of the milk-feeding first, so it will be easier for him to settle down and try new foods. If your baby does not appear interested, do not force him to eat; wait several days and try again. Don't expect your baby to eat much at first – probably a couple teaspoons. Feed your baby with a small spoon – not through the bottle. Introducing solid foods is a time not only to provide for your baby nutritionally, but also to encourage and support developmental changes as well.

What should I feed my baby first?

The best first food is iron fortified rice cereal mixed with formula or breast milk. Rice cereal is the least likely grain to cause an allergic reaction and the iron is well absorbed by the baby's system. Start out with two teaspoons of cereal once daily and gradually increase until he is taking a total of 1/3 cup to 1/2 cup daily. This amount will provide all the iron your baby needs on a daily basis. Continue to serve iron fortified infant cereal through the high-risk period for iron deficiency anemia, up to 8 months. If no signs of allergy or intolerance are

present you may start iron fortified baby cream of wheat, oatmeal, barley, or mixed grain cereals. Discontinue any new foods if your baby vomits, develops diarrhea, constipation, or draws his knees up to his chest and cries following the feeding. Wait at least five days between introducing new foods so you can pinpoint what may be causing allergy symptoms or intolerance. You can mix the infant cereals to the texture your baby accepts best (from runny to fairly thick) Begin with one feeding per day and gradually increase to three feedings per day.

What do I add next?

Once your baby is taking iron enriched cereals well (usually takes about one month to learn how to work up to ½ cup of cereal per day), then fruits and vegetables can be added to the diet. Nutritionally, fruit and vegetables supply good sources of vitamins A, C, and carbohydrates; they also introduce your baby to lumpier foods of different flavors and textures.

One “excellent” or two “good” sources of vitamin C are needed everyday. Each serving should be about 1/3 cups, as C is not stored in the body and is needed daily. Fresh citrus fruits and juices should not be introduced until one year because they are highly allergenic.

Vitamin C Sources

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>
Broccoli	Asparagus
Cantaloupe	Honeydew Melon
Cabbage	Potato
Cauliflower	Puréed baby fruits
Mango	Tomatoes*
Papaya	Tangerine*
Grapefruit*	
Oranges*	
Spinach	
Strawberries*	*Highly allergenic

Your baby needs one “excellent” source every other day or one “good” source of vitamin A daily (1/4 cup servings). Vitamin A is stored in the body and its stores can be drawn from, if needed.

Vitamin A Sources

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>
Apricots	Apricot Nectar
Cantaloupe	Asparagus
Carrots	Broccoli
Mixed Vegetables	Nectarine
Mango	Purple Plums
Pumpkin	
Spinach & Greens	
Squash	
Sweet Potatoes	

Fruits and their juices are naturally sweet and many children can eat large quantities of them. Don't over do it, since more than 3-4 ounces of fruit juice daily can reduce appetite for other foods, cause stomach ache, and/or cause diarrhea. If your baby wants more juice, dilute it with water so it will last longer. Always use 100% unsweetened fruit juices, not fruit drinks, cocktails or Kool-Aid, which contains added sugars and very little fruit juice. Never send your baby to bed with a bottle of milk or fruit juice as this can cause cavities, even in baby teeth.

Start with 1-2 teaspoons of a new fruit or vegetable and gradually work up to ¼ cup to 1/3 cup serving. There is no certain order in introducing fruits and vegetables. Again, offer the new food several times and observe how your baby reacts, waiting 5 days before starting another new food. Provide your baby with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables to obtain a good mix of all the needed nutrients.

Remember to introduce new foods with a good attitude and a smile. Saying "I'm sure this tastes good" and "Yum-Yum" is better than an expression of disgust. Just because you don't like something doesn't mean your baby won't! If, however, a food is continually rejected, even after waiting a few days in between, respect your baby's preference and move on to other foods.

Should I use commercial baby food or homemade baby food?

The choice is yours - there are pros and cons to each. Commercial baby foods are safe, nutritious, sanitary, and no longer contain added salt and sugar (except baby desserts, which contain added sugar and are unnecessary anyway). Read the food label for detailed ingredient information. When feeding your baby, put the portion you will use in a separate container and refrigerate the rest in a jar. If you spoon feed directly out of the jar, the food will spoil quickly due to enzymes in your baby's saliva on the spoon.

When preparing homemade baby foods, make sure your work area and equipment are spotlessly clean to avoid any possible contamination. A food processor or baby food grinder can be used to make baby foods. You may want to freeze large batches in ice cube trays and store cubes in zip lock bags or freezer containers for future use.

Do not add salt or sugar to suit your taste - baby does not need either of those. Making your own baby food is great if you have the time and energy, but don't feel you are cheating your baby if don't. Commercial baby foods have improved in the last several years and are more natural than they used to be.

When your baby is eating a wide variety of puréed fruits and vegetables, puréed meats may be introduced. No certain order of introduction is needed, but again, wait 5 days between new foods. The meat and vegetable mixed dinners are not necessary and are lower in protein than puréed meat alone. In addition, the source of allergy symptoms is hard to pinpoint with so many foods in one dinner. Many babies do not care for meats. Don't worry if your baby does not care for meat - the protein requirement is fulfilled from breast milk or formula.

As your baby progresses through puréed baby foods, you can also offer unsalted baby crackers, bread, and unsweetened dry cereal to pick up and eat. In doing this, you will be helping developmental skills by allowing practice of the pincer grasp (using thumb and first finger) and hand-mouth coordination. Cornflakes, Cheerios, Chex, cereals, rice cakes, breads, rolls, and unsalted crackers are usually favorites. Remember, the 5 day rule still applies.

When should I give my baby cow's milk?

Breast milk or formula provides the ideal balance of protein, carbohydrate, and fat until one year of age. After that, whole-pasteurized cow's milk (not 2% or skim milk) may be introduced. Occasionally, whole milk will be introduced at an earlier age if the child is getting at least 50% of his calories from solid foods and if there is as good intake of iron-rich foods. You can speak to your healthcare provider regarding this. If your child has shown an allergy to cow's milk in the past, let your healthcare provider know.

When will my baby start eating table foods?

Between seven and ten months, your baby will be able to sit in a high chair and show good hand to mouth coordination. This means the child is ready to join the family for three meals daily, and is also ready to progress from strained baby foods to semi-solid, mashed, or chunked foods.

Tender, cooked fruits and vegetables or canned fruits that are chopped or mashed are a good way to try out your baby's new skills. Avoid vegetables canned in salt and fruits canned in syrup. Many fresh fruits such as peaches, pears, and plums (all with the skin removed) are good choices to chop or mash.

Remember that babies need to experiment and explore food with their fingers to feel the different textures. They also like to look at and smell food before eating, so expect messiness and time-consuming meals.

As your baby progresses to table food, you will want to serve as many foods as possible from your own menu so you are not cooking two separate meals.

Many meats are too tough for your baby to chew, so cut them into very small pieces or stick to easily chewed meats like a hamburger. Sliced cheese or cheese sticks and cooked beans are a good protein substitute if the meat is not appropriate for your baby. When making casseroles, limit the salt and spices or take your baby's portion out before you add them. The taste for salt is developed over a lifetime of eating high salt foods. Most of us eat too much salt anyway and need to cut down in later life, so start your baby early on a healthful diet!

Your baby's meal patterns will be changing from the demand-feeds of infants to the meal-plus-snacks routine of a toddler. Snacks can help tie your baby over between meals or if your meals are at irregular times. Offer nutritious snacks such as:

Graham Crackers

Unsweetened Fruit

Unsalted Crackers or Rice Cakes

Non-Sugared Cold Cereal

Cheese

Are there any foods my child should not eat?

Until your baby reaches one year of age, it is best to avoid:

Egg whites, fish, seafood: Highly allergenic foods

Honey: babies under 1 year are at risk for botulism for spores in honey

Fresh citrus fruits and juices: High acid content can cause rashes

Foods to be avoided throughout infancy and toddlerhood since they are easily choked on include:

Nuts and peanuts

Popcorn

Raw carrots

Hot dog rounds (cut lengthwise)

Hard candy

Whole grapes (cut lengthwise)

Variation in appetite and minimal lengthwise

Your baby will vary greatly in food consumption day to day. He may eat a lot one day and next to nothing the next. Don't worry as long as on a weekly basis your baby meets these minimal requirements and weight is increasing at a satisfactory rate. If your baby shows little interest in eating solid foods, watch the amount of juice or even formula he is drinking. You may need to impose a limit to save some hunger for solid foods. Dilute juice with water or serve plain-water - many babies are just thirsty and water quenches their thirst just fine.

Listen to cues from your baby on what and how much he wants to eat. Your baby will certainly let you know his preference, but it may take repeated exposure for him to accept a particular food. Babies, like adults, like a variety of food in their diet. Watching your baby progress in eating habits is exciting - just when you think you have all the preferences and abilities figured out, they change!

The minimum amount of food from each of the food groups your child needs from 4 to 12 months is:

Milk	16-24 ounces (breast or formula) daily
Fruits & Vegetables	4 servings daily → each 1-2 tablespoons Vitamin C source → daily Vitamin A source → 3 times weekly
Bread & Cereal	4 servings daily → each about ¼ adult serving size
Meat, Poultry, Cheese & Beans	2 servings daily → each about ½ ounce or 1 tablespoon