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Ages & Stages

Getting Started With Solid Foods



When your infant is able to sit independently and grab for things to put in her mouth, it's time to begin introducing **solid foods**. Start with simple, basic foods such as rice cereal. You should add breast milk or warm formula to the cereal, mixing about 1 tablespoon of cereal with every 4 to 5 tablespoons of breast milk. Look for infant cereals that are fortified with iron, which can provide about 30% to 45% of your infant's daily iron needs. About midway through the first year, her natural stores of iron will have become depleted, so extra iron is a good idea.



Here are some additional recommendations to keep in mind.

- Introduce your baby to other solid foods gradually. Good initial choices are other simple cereals, such as oatmeal, as well as vegetables and fruits. Most pediatricians recommend offering vegetables before offering fruits.
- Start these new foods one at a time, at intervals of every 2 to 3 days. This approach will allow your infant to become used to the taste and texture of each new food. It can also help you identify any food sensitivities or allergies that may develop as each new food is started. Some pediatricians advise introducing wheat and mixed cereals last because young babies could have **allergic reactions** to them. Contact your doctor if symptoms (for example, diarrhea, vomiting, rash) develop that seem to be related to particular foods.
- In the beginning, feed your infant small serving sizes—even just 1 to 2 small spoonfuls to start.
- Within about 2 to 3 months after starting solid foods, your infant should be consuming a daily diet that includes not only breast milk or formula, but also cereal, vegetables, fruits, and meats, divided among 3 meals.
- When your infant is about 8 to 9 months old, give her *finger* foods or table foods that she can pick up and feed to herself. Make sure she's not putting anything into her mouth that's large enough to cause **choking**. Do not give small infants raisins, nuts, popcorn, or small or hard food pieces that can be easily aspirated.

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