

FIRST TASTES

Stage 1 Smooth Textures and Tastes

WHEN TO START SOLIDS

Breast feeding provides all the nutrition your baby needs for the first six months (26 weeks) of life. If you choose not to breast feed, infant formula is a safe alternative and provides all the nutrition your baby needs for the first 6 months (26 weeks) of life. You need not rush to give solids before 6 months (26 weeks). If you decide to start solids earlier, do not start them before 4 months (17 weeks) of age. **The introduction of solids too early can increase the risk of infections and development of allergies.** From 6 months (26 weeks) your baby needs more than just milk so it is important to begin weaning at 6 months (26 weeks). Look for signs that your baby is ready to start solids which include:-

1. Weight gain may have slowed down on milk alone.
2. Baby may seem unsatisfied after its milk feed or may want feeding earlier than usual or may wake up at night for a feed when they were previously sleeping through. Babies can have growth spurts so they may just need more milk for a few days.
3. Is able to sit with support and pick food up.
4. Starts to show an interest in food.
5. No longer automatically pushes solids out of his/her mouth.

HOW TO BEGIN

The first stage of weaning is to allow your baby to get used to taking food from a spoon. Remember this is a new experience for your baby and your baby may be puzzled by it. The following tips may be useful.

1. Don't try spoon feeding for the first time when your baby is very hungry, tired or upset.
2. It may be best to give some milk first and then try spoon feeding.
3. It does not matter which feed you begin to introduce solids.
4. You can put your baby in a baby bouncer seat or car seat to give solids so that you can see each other. Other people like to sit baby on their lap.

The best spoon to use is a small special plastic baby spoon or a flat plastic one. Remember to sterilise feeding equipment if your baby is under 6 months (26 weeks) of age. Your baby may take time to learn to eat from a spoon, perhaps a week or two. Use 1 to 2 teaspoons of food at one meal and gradually increase the amount. If your baby is 6 months old (26 weeks) or near to 6 months (26 weeks) they will need to be moved on to a mixed diet more quickly than a 4 month (17 weeks) old baby. Do not add solids e.g. rusks to the bottle. If your baby spits out food do not worry, try again the next day. Your baby may just not be hungry.

SUITABLE FIRST SOLIDS

Savoury foods and fruit are the most suitable. They should be of a smooth consistency and bland taste. Foods can be mixed with cooled, boiled water, expressed breast milk or infant formula. When your baby has got used to taking food from a spoon, different tastes and pureed textures can be introduced. Offering a variety of tastes is important. Children don't always take to something the first time it is offered so don't discount it try again another day.

It is worth persevering because children who like a wide range of foods at this stage rarely develop food fads later. It is no longer recommended that babies be introduced to one food at a time.

Suitable first foods include:-

- ☺ baby rice
- ☺ mashed potato (made from potatoes boiled at home and then mashed)
- ☺ pureed non-fibrous vegetables (carrots, swede, parsnip)
- ☺ pureed soft fruit (e.g. apple, banana, pear)
- ☺ custard made using whole full fat doorstep cow's milk
- ☺ unsweetened plain yogurt

SUGAR, HONEY AND SALT

Do not add these to foods. It is important not to add **salt** because your baby's kidneys cannot function as well as yours, so too much can be harmful. **Sugar** damages the developing teeth and should be limited to that needed to improve the taste of sour fruits, e.g. tart cooking apple. **Spoonable honey** should be avoided in babies under 1 year, as it has been found to occasionally contain harmful spores.

BABY RICE

Baby rice is a convenient first food. To give flavour, add a little pureed fruit or vegetables to the baby rice. Once again do not add sugar.

VEGETABLES

A little unsalted, cooked and pureed vegetable is another way of adding variety to your baby's diet. Suitable pureed vegetables are carrots, turnips, swede, parsnips or potatoes. If you need to thin down the consistency, do so by adding a little water or expressed breast milk. The addition of a teaspoon of uncooked cornflour, previously mixed with water, helps to make a smoother texture, preferred by some babies.

FRUIT

A little unsweetened, stewed or pureed fruit such as apples, pears or bananas may be offered.

Another idea would be to puree some tinned fruit choose it in 'its own juice'.

GLUTEN CONTAINING FOODS

Gluten (wheat, rye, barley and oats) containing foods, e.g. rusk, bread, wholegrain cereals, should be avoided until after 6 months (26 weeks) of age. If commercial baby foods are used, these should be gluten free before the age of 6 months (26 weeks).

MILK CONTAINING PRODUCTS

Full fat pasteurised cow's milk can be used in the preparation of foods such as custards and sauces and in the form of yogurt, fromage frais (ordinary and baby varieties) from 4 months (17 weeks) of age. However, ordinary cow's milk should not be used as a drink until 1 year of age. This is because it is not designed for babies and doesn't contain all the nutrition babies need. Cow's milk may be added to breakfast cereal, e.g. Weetabix, from 6 months (26 weeks) or just use your current formula milk if you are feeding your baby on an infant formula. If you are using a baby cereal, follow the manufacturer's instructions on the packet.

THE NEXT STEP

Once your baby is used to taking food from a spoon, the quantity and variety of food offered can start to increase. Do not hurry, introduce new tastes and textures gradually. Foods should start to become lumpier.

EGGS

Eggs should not be introduced into your baby's diet until after 6 months (26 weeks) of age. This is because of the risk of food allergy. They should be cooked until the white and yolk are hard.

CHEESE

Pureed cottage cheese and a little mild flavoured grated cheese may be given from about six months (26 weeks). This is because of the high salt content of hard cheese. These can be added to vegetables and baby rice.

MEAT

This can be pureed and offered to your baby with vegetables. Meat cooked for the family meal can be used if your baby's portion is removed before any salt or pepper is added.

SALT

Salt should not be added to foods being used for baby either in cooking or at the table. Salty foods, e.g. stock cubes, should only be added to food in small and weak amounts.

BABY FOODS

These are available canned, dried and in jars. Choose savoury varieties or unsweetened desserts – these can make a convenient meal for your baby, and are useful when travelling. These foods should not replace fresh foods prepared at home. Make sure you choose 'no added' salt/sugar varieties and avoid those containing gluten and eggs before six months (26 weeks).

VITAMIN DROPS

Vitamin drops should be given to some babies and children after six months (26 weeks) of age. Your health visitor can give you more information on the use of vitamin drops.

DRINKS

It is surprising how many people think that a baby cries only from hunger or discomfort. Babies do get thirsty, especially in warm weather, so between feeds offer a drink of tap water which has been boiled and then cooled. Tap water no longer needs to be boiled for babies over 6 months (26 weeks) of age. This can be given on a teaspoon or in a suitable feeding beaker or in a bottle.

If flavouring is needed, some natural unsweetened apple or orange juice may be added. This should be very dilute (1 part juice to 6 parts water).

Some concentrated fruit juices, "baby" fruit juices, soft drinks, or syrups are sweetened with sugar, sucrose, glucose, dextrose or honey (which are all types of sugar) and should be avoided. Fruit squashes are also unsuitable because they usually contain artificial colourings, flavourings and sweeteners.

Softened or bottled waters labelled "natural mineral water" or sparkling mineral water or water from jug filters should not be used due to their high salt content. There are some still bottled waters which are suitable for babies when you go on holiday, where the tap water is unsafe. Like tap water, these need to be boiled and cooled before being used to make up formula feeds or given to babies under 6 months (26 weeks) of age as a drink. Suitable ones include Evian and Vittel.

It is recommended that breast feeding or feeding with an infant formula should be continued to at least the end of the first year as part of your baby's diet.

USEFUL EQUIPMENT

When making your own food, the following equipment ensures that the food is pureed to a smooth consistency:-

1. **Fork and a sieve** (metal/plastic).
2. **A baby mouli** is a special type of grinder available from large chemists or hardware stores. Most types of food can be pureed using the mouli. The mouli is cheap to buy and easy to sterilise.
3. **A liquidiser or food processor.** If you have one it can be used to produce puree for your baby. It is easier to use with larger quantities, or for making batches of puree which may be frozen.
4. **A hand blender.** These are very useful, enabling you to quickly puree small quantities for your baby.

STERILISATION OF EQUIPMENT

It is important to make sure that the equipment used for your baby is clean and free from germs.

1. **WASH** in hot water and remove all food particles using a soft brush.
2. **COVER** in sterilising solution. Always follow the manufacturer's recommended instructions.

Sterilisation fluid needs to be changed every 24 hours.
3. Steam sterilisers are quick and easy to use.

IN CONCLUSION:

Points to note at this stage:

- Commercial weaning foods have no advantage over foods cooked at home, as long as the diet is balanced. Family foods can be used and are often cheaper.
- Your baby will take time to learn to eat from a spoon, perhaps a week or two.
- Start with a flat plastic spoon at a time when your baby is most hungry.
- Do not add solids (e.g. rusks) to bottles. Milk only should be in your baby's bottle.
- Do not add salt, sugar or honey to food during or after cooking.
- Gradually increase the quantities that you give.
- Always watch your baby at mealtimes. Remember meals may be messy, take time, but they should be fun!

ENJOY MEAL TIMES WITH YOUR BABY

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