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Your Guide to Starting Solids

When should you start your baby on solids?

We know, there's a lot of information out there about why to introduce babies to which foods and when. Let's get to the facts first, then we'll talk about how to get started.

Before your baby turns 4 months, they can't move solid foods around in their mouth or safely swallow. That's why they should only have breastmilk or formula until they're a wee bit older and one year of age. When your little one is about 6 months old and has the skills and strength to be a Supported Sitter, they may be ready for their first cereal experience.

How do you set up your baby to try new foods?

There's no reason to make this a challenge. Settle in, have some fun and watch how your baby learns and explores. The best way to do that? Keep your baby and yourself comfortable the whole way through.

- Make it easy on yourself. Choose a time of day when your baby is happy, wide-awake and you don't feel rushed.
- Dress your baby in clothes that can get messy—it will be easier to enjoy the silly moments if you aren't wondering how to get spots off their cutest outfit.
- Sit baby up in an upright infant seat or high chair making sure their head is in an upright position and not tilted back.
- Start baby off with the food they know. Breast- or bottle-feed first so they are not overly hungry, then offer the solid food. You don't even need to decrease the amount of breastmilk or formula you offer beforehand, just give them their normal amount.
- Feed your baby's first foods from a familiar, colorful bowl with a baby spoon, not from the jar, tub or pouch and never from a bottle unless your pediatrician says otherwise.
- Trying new foods is both fun and messy. Let baby explore the feel and aroma of each new food in their hands.

So how do you get them to eat the cereal—not wear it?

These tips might help get a little more in their mouth than on their face—but don't sweat it if things get messy. That's what bath time is for!

- Mix the cereal with breastmilk or formula for the first try. Start out liquidy then you can move to a thicker consistency once you feel your baby has figured out how to master the thin texture.
- Only prepare as much as you think your baby will eat. Prepared cereal can grow bacteria, so make sure not to save it after.
- For the first bite, try putting a dab of cereal on your baby's bottom lip. If that first taste went well, get their attention by putting a spoonful of cereal where they can see it. When baby opens their mouth gently place the spoon just inside and let them try removing the cereal from the spoon using their lips.
- Feed your baby as slowly or as quickly as they want and always look out for fullness cues like refusing to open their mouth, leaning back in the high chair, or turning their head away from the spoon.
- There's no need to get frustrated—wait and try another time if your child isn't into the cereal at first.

What you should look out for when you're worried about food allergies

Allergies can be a big deal, and it's good to keep your eye out for reactions. These steps will help, but your pediatrician is there for you if you have any questions.

- Keep it simple by starting with baby oatmeal or rice cereal. When you offer only single-grain cereals it's easier to pinpoint possible food sensitivities or reactions your baby might have to a new food.
- Allergy symptoms may show up minutes after eating or they might not appear for hours or days. That's why it's best to allow about three days between new foods to watch for possible reactions.
- Some symptoms to watch for include: a skin rash, diarrhea, congestion or vomiting. If you see any of these signs, stop the new food and call your pediatrician.