

WHEN TO START? The AAP recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed until six months of age. If you choose to start complementary foods between 4 and 6 months, it's not meant to be the main source of your baby's nutrition. Breast milk/formula are still the main "food".

WHEN TO INTRODUCE A CUP TO YOUR INFANT? According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, age 6-9 months is an ideal time to let your baby experiment with a drinking cup. You can choose a sippy cup, straw cup or even open cup to get started. Most infants can use a cup solo by 10-12 months of age and an open cup by 18 months of age.

WHEN TO SUSPEND USE OF THE BOTTLE? According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, they recommend suspending use of the bottle as early as possible. Since most infants can readily use a cup by 12 months of age this is a good time to stop the bottles. You can slowly transition using cups with meals and bottles at nap and sleep times. Once teeth have erupted be sure to brush your child's teeth after milk consumption to prevent dental carries.

If you have exclusively breastfed your baby then you may start using a cup at 6-9 months of age and skip ever using a bottle. In addition, breastfed babies with teeth also need to have them brushed following milk consumption.

WHEN TO PHASE OUT THE PACIFIER? Babies naturally suck to soothe themselves. Some babies use a pacifier and some have found their thumb. A pacifier you can control, a thumb you cannot! It is recommended to limit pacifiers to the crib at 6 months of age and phase them out by 9 months of age. Pacifiers can affect the palate and proper tooth eruption and also are a source of germs as infants become mobile with them.

STAGE 1: First solid foods. Only contain single ingredients like squash, peaches, apples, cereals. Usually 2 ounce jars.

STAGE 2: Chunkier textures and some combos of stage 1 foods. Usually 4 ounce jars.

STAGE 3: Combo meals that are very textured. Come in 5-6 ounce jars and usually contain meats.

FINGER FOODS: Foods that baby can pick up and eat himself. Usually small bits cheerios, ground meat, fruits.

TABLE FOODS: Foods that adults eat.

WHAT TO START WITH? Depends on when you start. If starting around 4 months, then foods that are the least allergic are usually the best ("Stage 1 Foods"). If you wait until 6 months, then anything goes as long as your baby can handle the texture.

Most babies need iron and zinc by the time they are 6 months, so the first foods should reflect these needs. Options include meat and/ or infant cereals.

HOW DO I START? If you start with rice cereal, mix it with either expressed breast milk or formula. Make sure you check to see if formula is already added to the brand you choose! If your baby has a cow's milk allergy this can be a problem. Make it very watery about two tablespoons. Offer this

cereal to baby as a snack *after* breastfeeding or bottle. Some babies will eat too much of the watery rice cereal if they are really hungry. Start with one feeding a day for 3-4 days. Stick to rice cereal before 6 months of age. If baby is over 6 months, other grains like oatmeal and barley are an option. Remember that rice cereal has no fiber and if your baby eats a lot of it, he may become constipated.

SHOULD I MAKE MY OWN BABY FOOD? Yes! All you need is a baby food grinder or mill. You can use herbs and spices, just limit the salt. It's great to get your baby used to your cooking. Use the staged jar food as a guide for amount/ types and textures of foods to make.

SHOULD I USE ORGANIC FOODS? This is really a personal choice. Several studies have shown that there isn't much to be gained by eating organic fruits and vegetables. However, there is strong evidence that organic cow-based products (cheese, milk, meat, yogurt) are potentially a healthier choice. All processed Stage 1 foods are made preservative and additive free. However, as noted above, some rice cereals have formula added before dehydration.

WHAT FOODS ARE MORE LIKELY TO CAUSE FOOD ALLERGIES?

- Peanuts
- Egg whites
- Shellfish/Fish
- Tree nuts
- Wheat
- Cow's Milk
- Soy
- Citrus fruits/berries
- Cocoa
- Sesame seeds

If your family has NO history of food allergies, the AAP's latest food recommendations say that it is okay to introduce allergy-causing foods to babies as young as 6 months. If your family does have food allergies, speak with your doctor about when to offer these foods.

Make sure you only offer one new food every 3-4 days so you can identify if there is a problem with a food. Allergic symptoms include: *a rash, profuse vomiting and/or horrible diarrhea* Most reactions occur within 4 hours of ingestion of allergy-causing food.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD MY BABY AVOID?

Honey
Choking Hazards:
Raw carrots, celery, popcorn, potato chips, nuts, hard candy, hard meats, fruits with seeds, raisins, hotdogs and grapes (unless cut up well)



GOOD HABITS START EARLY! It is a good idea to schedule a visit with our Dietician to learn more about healthy eating for your baby.