

Manhattan Pediatrics, PC

Starting solid foods (Age 5 – 6 months)

Congratulations! Your child will soon be ready to start solid foods.

Signs of readiness for solids include:

- Loss of tongue thrust reflex (pushing food out of mouth with tongue)
- Ability to stay seated upright in high chair and hold head up unassisted
- Reaching for food on other family members' plates

Breast milk or formula will continue to be the primary nutritional source for your child throughout the first year.

The goals for the introduction of solids at this age are to:

- Teach your child to take and manipulate pureed foods from a spoon
- Allow your baby to explore a variety of different foods, tastes and (eventually) textures
- Increase the intake of nutrients such as iron whose levels may not be sufficient in breast milk alone

How to introduce foods for the first time:

There are no strict rules for starting solid foods, just some general principles. **So relax and have fun!**

Pick a time of day when you are relaxed and not distracted; it should be 45 mins. to 1 hr. before your baby is due for his/her next feeding. This way your baby will be hungry but not starving. Have your baby sit in a high chair or baby seat. Put a bib on the baby and prepare for a mess.

You can start with 1 tablespoon of baby cereal (see below) and mix with enough breast milk or formula so that it is a thin consistency. Do not put cereal in the bottle. Start with a spoon and feed small amounts. As your baby gets used to eating cereal you can increase to 2 – 3 feedings per day and gradually make the cereal thicker. You do not need to limit the amount of solids you are feeding your baby. If he/she continues to open his/her mouth, you can keep feeding.

During the first few feeding sessions, and later when full or disinterested, babies will often turn their heads and spit out the food. Don't force-feed your baby. It is a learning process – babies need to adapt to a spoon and to food with texture. The goal is not to get a specific volume of food into your baby – it's more about exploring/learning/tasting/play.

Once your baby is used to cereal you can try vegetable and fruit purees – start with vegetables first. Buy premade stage 1 foods or make your own. New foods can be introduced every 2 – 3 days. If your baby resists a food, wait and try a few days later – they have to reject a food on > 10 occasions before you can say they don't like it! At 6 months, you can also introduce tap water, up to 4 ozs per day, in a sippy cup.

Great first foods:

- Infant cereals – rice, barley, oatmeal
- Veggie purees – squash, sweet potatoes, carrots, peas, beans, avocado
- Fruit purees – banana, apple, pear, peach, prunes, apricots
- Meats (6 – 7 months) – pureed chicken, turkey

Foods to avoid (until baby's first birthday):

- Honey – may contain botulism spores
- Nuts/nut products, shellfish, egg whites – allergenic
- If making food yourself: do not add salt or sweeteners; OK to mix foods with breast milk, formula or water