



All They Really Need: Trusting the Wisdom of Nature to Raise Resilient Kids

FIRST SOLID FOODS!

Breast milk is the ideal food for babies for the first six months.

Introducing solids during the four- to six-month window may reduce the risk of food allergies. Consider introducing solid food when your child:

- shows interest in others eating food (ideally, include your baby during mealtimes right from the beginning to model and set a standard of healthy family meals, which have many benefits)
- sits confidently with some support, and has strong head and neck control
- stops reflexively pushing substances out of his mouth with his tongue

There is no “right” way to introduce solids, or a “right” first food. Some principles:

- Your baby’s iron stores (and breastmilk) are depleted by about six months, so iron-rich foods are important; strained meats are a good example, and could easily be baby’s first food; processed iron-fortified cereals aren’t ideal, as they can be constipating.
- Higher-allergenic foods such as egg whites, peanuts and tree nuts, gluten, and dairy should be introduced in this four- to six-month window; if your child or family has allergies, speak to your healthcare provider.
- Most babies will not have intolerances to healthy first foods; if you notice any concerning change in skin or behaviour, talk to your child’s healthcare providers.
- Babies have an inherent sweet tooth (have you ever tasted breast milk?!); while it is not recommended to add extra sugar (or salt) to foods, naturally sweet foods like fruits are great.
- The first foods should be very soft, and easily squashed between two fingers; always supervise (and take an infant first aid and CPR course!)
 - Prepared “baby foods” are more expensive, create waste, and are less nutritionally dense.
 - Babies can eat the same deconstructed whole foods that the rest of the family consumes.
- Part of the learning experience is touching, smelling, and playing with food. Hand your child a spoon and get used to a mess! This also develops the ability to recognize hunger and satiety cues, critical for self-regulation.
- Solid foods will change the consistency and odour of a child’s stool. The change in consistency may make them uncomfortable at first; if you are concerned about the frequency of bowel movements, or discomfort, check in with their healthcare provider.



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- Babies (and toddlers) are naturally neophobic; it can take ten to fifteen offerings of a new food before a child accepts it (and they may never develop a love of kale).
 - It is the parent's job to decide what goes on the table (i.e., a variety of healthy options); it's the child's job to decide which of the options and how much to consume—and this may change a lot over time!
- Try offering solids once per day before breastfeeding, when your child is not desperate; at first consider it play. Don't worry if it doesn't seem like your child has consumed much; until they are a year old, breastmilk continues to be the primary source of nutrition. Gradually offer more variety, more frequently.
- As your child approaches twelve months old, her diet should evolve into including the same healthy whole foods that the rest of the family eats, offering three meals, and two to three or three healthy snacks per day; the quantity and preferences per meal will vary with growth rate and activity level.
- Water should be introduced when solids are; sippy cups or bottles aren't necessary. Offer water in a cup and help your child learn to hold and drink from it; please do not introduce juice, even one hundred per cent or milk; non-caffeinated herbal teas are fine.

First food suggestions (a possible progression):

- raw, fork-mashed avocado or banana
- apple, pear, peach, carrot, broccoli, spinach, sweet potato (steamed until fork mashable)
- homemade cereal: grind whole oats, brown rice, barley, etc. in a food processor; boil 1 cup water and add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ground grains; simmer until all absorbed (play with the proportions to find the ideal consistency). You can add smooth nut butters, mashed fruits, etc. to this over time.
- chicken, beef, turkey, or fish (wild, free-range, grass fed, etc.), thoroughly cooked and pureed
- tofu (GMO free, organic)
- thoroughly cooked and mashed legumes (lentils, beans, etc.)
- whole eggs, boiled and smashed, or scrambled (consider adding cooked greens)
- full fat cheese or yogurt (no sugar, please!)

As your child expands his repertoire, start adding new foods to previously accepted ones to create more complex meals and snacks—again, assuming your family is eating a wide variety of healthy, whole foods, your baby can eat what you're having, in a more developmentally appropriate form!

Have fun!