

Infant Feeding – 4 to 6 Months

What do I feed my baby?

The main food in your baby's diet is still breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula. If he is showing signs of readiness, you can start infant cereal. If your baby does not show these signs, do not start. Wait until he is ready. Also, if there is history of food allergies in your family, you might want to wait until closer to 6 months of age before starting solid foods.

Your baby is ready for pureed foods when he:

- Can hold his head up steadily.
- Opens his mouth when he sees food.
- Can sit with support in an infant seat or high chair.
- Does not push the spoon out of his mouth with his tongue.
- Keeps food in mouth and swallows it.
- Can turn his head to stop a feeding.

How much should my baby eat?

Breast Milk or Infant Formula: 27 to 45 ounces in 24 hours

The amount of breast milk or infant formula your baby drinks will depend on how much he weighs and the amount of foods eaten. Around 6 months of age, you can expect your baby to eat 3 meals each day. Each meal may consist of about 2 to 4 ounces of strained baby foods.

What food do I start with to feed my baby?

- Start with iron-fortified rice cereal. Add 1 tablespoon of rice cereal to 4 to 5 tablespoons of breast milk or formula. Babies prefer a smooth, semi-liquid texture. As he gets older and better at swallowing, he will like a thicker, lumpier texture.
- Use a baby size spoon to feed you baby.
- You can offer 2 to 4 tablespoons of rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula per day.
- He may advance from iron-fortified rice cereal to oatmeal and barley. It's best to wait for wheat and mixed cereal until later, since they can cause allergic reactions in young babies.
- Feed your baby foods from a spoon and liquids from a bottle. Never use an "infant feeder" syringe bottle.

When can I start other solids?

- After your baby is comfortable with cereals, you may want to start offering plain, single-ingredient food. Move on to fruits and vegetables. After that, then give him combination foods and meats.
- Give your baby just one new food at a time. Wait for 2 to 3 days before starting another food. After each new food watch for allergic reactions such as diarrhea, rash or vomiting.
- As soon as you start giving your baby solids foods, you may notice his stools may change color and texture.

When should I offer juice?

Babies do not need additional water or juice at this age. Wait until your baby is at least 6 months old before offering 1-2 ounces of juice in a cup.

Feeding tips:

- Let your baby decide how much he wants to eat. Never force your baby to eat more than he wants.
- Meal times will be messy. Have fun! Don't expect a lot. Most of your baby's nutrition will still come from formula or breast milk. Be patient. Give him time to practice eating with a spoon.
- If he doesn't like a food, try again later. Some babies have to taste a food for 20 times before they decide they like it.
- Feed your baby in an infant car seat or a high-chair using towels for support. Infants can choke easily and should be watched closely while eating.
- Avoid putting your baby to bed with a bottle of breast milk or formula. It may lead to tooth decay.

How do I keep baby foods safe?

- Always be sure to wash your hands before making your baby's food.
- Take the amount of food from the container that you want to feed your baby into a small dish. Feed your baby from this food. Throw any food not eaten at this feeding away.
- Refrigerate the remaining food in the jar for up to 2 days. Dipping the spoon back in the jar, after it has been in your infant's mouth will cause bacteria to grow and make the food unsafe
- Check "use by" dates on baby food. If the date has passed, throw it out.
- Don't heat baby foods in the microwave. The heat is uneven and can have "hot spots" that can burn your baby's mouth.

Can I make my own baby food?

Homemade baby foods are easy to make, can save you money, and increase the variety of foods for your baby. There is no need to add salt or sugar to your baby's food.