



## Introducing Solid Foods to Baby

Key points	When ?
<p>Infancy is the period of most rapid growth in weight, height. Growth in the first 4 months of life is 150–200g per week. Growth between 4-6 months of life is 100–150 g per week. In the first 6 months the average infant doubles birth weight.</p> <p>First foods should be iron-rich. An increasing range and quantity of foods should be introduced by 12 months. Breast milk or infant formula should be continued while introducing solids (until 12 months old).</p> <p><b>Breastfeeding</b> helps <b>reducing risk of food allergies</b></p> <p><b>Food offered should be appropriate texture and consistency for developmental stage:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing and varying food texture is essential for oral motor development.</li> <li>- An infant will quickly learn to manage foods of different textures</li> <li>- Encouraging the infant to chew is important.</li> <li>- Infants not given 'lumpy' textured food until after 10 months of age have greater feeding difficulties at 15 months than those introduced to lumpy food before 6 months or between 6 and 9 months</li> <li>- Possibly a 'critical window' of opportunity to introduce textured foods to reduce risk of later feeding difficulties.</li> <li>- Avoid small, hard pieces of food as they can cause choking.</li> <li>- Continued breastfeeding/infant formula until 12 months of age is important for good nutrition.</li> <li>- Other drinks including cow's milk, fruit juice and sugar-sweetened drinks should not be given; they interfere with intake of breast milk or formula.</li> </ul>	<p>By <b>around 6 months</b> of age</p> <p>Most 6 month-old infants are able to adapt to different foods, food textures and modes of feeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- appetite and nutritional requirements are not met by breast milk or infant formula</li> <li>- several nutrient stores (iron, zinc) decrease after 6 months of age (esp iron)</li> <li>- feeding behaviour progressed from sucking to biting</li> <li>- the tongue-extrusion reflex has disappeared</li> <li>- the increasing ability to sit without support allows manipulation of food</li> <li>- the digestive system has matured to digest starches most infants have developed an interest in their environment, willingness to accept new textures and flavours.</li> </ul>

### Problems associated with earlier or later introduction of solid foods

Introducing solid foods too soon:	Delayed introduction of solid foods:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if less time is spent on the breast, maternal milk production may decline</li> <li>• if solid foods are introduced while the tongue-extrusion reflex is still strong, the infant will reject the spoon</li> <li>• exposure to pathogens present in foods can cause GI issues and diarrhea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growth can be affected as breast milk/infant formula insufficient after 6 months</li> <li>• immune protection can be compromised</li> <li>• micronutrient deficiencies can develop (iron and zinc), iron stores likely to deplete</li> <li>• development of motor skills (chewing) can be delayed, infant may be unwilling to accept new tastes and textures</li> <li>• association with increased risk of developing allergic syndromes</li> </ul>

What foods should be introduced?	Foods and beverages not suitable for infants or be used carefully
<p>No universal model of feeding for infants</p> <p>• <b>Iron-Rich Foods First</b> Start with iron-containing foods, including iron-enriched <b>infant cereals, pureed meat</b> (source of zinc and Vitamin B12), <b>poultry and fish</b> (all sources of haem iron), or cooked <b>tofu and legumes</b>.</p> <p>• <b>Vegetables, fruits, and dairy products</b> (full-fat yoghurt, cheese and custard) can then be added.</p> <p>Progress from pureed to mashed, lumpy then minced, chopped and to normal textures during the 6–12 month period.</p> <p>By 8 months infants can manage finger foods. By 12 months infants can have nutritious choices from the foods eaten by the family The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy has found that <b>there is no reason to delay the introduction of foods to prevent allergies</b>, including nuts in suitable form.</p> <p>• <b>Beverages</b> Breast milk or infant formula should be the main drink in the first 12 months. From 6 months, small amounts of cooled boiled water can supplement breast milk or infant formula</p>	<p>Solid foods should be <b>without added sugar, honey or salt</b>.</p> <p><u>Honey</u>: can contain the spores of <b>Clostridium botulinum</b>. Should not be given to infants aged under 12 months.</p> <p><u>Milk from animal sources</u>: Unmodified milk from animal sources should not be given as a main drink before 12 months. -cow's, goat's and sheep's milk is not suitable for infants -due to differences in protein and electrolyte concentrations</p> <p><u>Non-milk beverages</u>: juice, fruit juice, soda, tea, coffee Don't give to infants caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks</p> <p>Foods that are high <b>risk of choking</b> for children younger than 3 years: Ex: whole nuts, seeds, raw carrot, celery sticks and chunks of apple, whole grapes.</p>

**Please speak to your doctor or your well-baby nurse today if you are unsure or have any questions or concerns**