

Feeding Our Youngest

6 Months

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Big things are around the corner for you and your youngest, and it's time to consider next steps in feeding!

By now your baby and you are probably ready to explore solid foods. Your baby is developing in many ways that signal she is ready — for example, she is sitting up with support and shows she wants food by opening her mouth. Introducing your baby to the world of solid foods at the right time in her development helps her shape new food and feeding habits while establishing healthy eating patterns.

So, how do you begin feeding solid foods to your baby? One food at a time! It is important that your baby is introduced to single-ingredient foods one at a time, and that you watch his response to the food. Try out each food for 3 to 5 days and check for any reactions like

- Stomach aches
- Diarrhea
- Rashes
- Wheezing

Then go on to the next food, working to widen the foods your baby accepts.

After your baby is comfortable with iron-fortified baby cereal, you will want to introduce other complementary foods such as mashed vegetables and fruits, pureed meats, mashed hard-cooked eggs and beans, and plain yogurt. In the beginning, the texture will need to be smooth and lump-free, but soon baby will be ready for more texture. Avoid giving your baby any foods that have added salt or sugar. New foods will be flavorful to baby so no need for added salt or added sugar.



What if baby dislikes a new food? Take “no” for an answer for a while and offer it again later. It may take several introductions of a new food for your baby to accept it.

Not only do you want to slowly introduce the number of foods your baby eats, you will also want to slowly increase the amount and texture of solid foods in your baby's diet as well. Start with one feeding daily, by giving your baby 1 to 2 tablespoons of pureed foods, then gradually increase feedings and amount of solid food over time. You may notice that once baby starts eating more solid foods, he will take less breast milk or formula. For the first year, breast milk or formula still should be the main source of nutrition for baby.

As you feed, watch for signs your baby is full:

- Turns head away from spoon.
- Keeps mouth closed.
- Loses interest in food and feeding.

Food safety continues to be important when feeding your youngest, whether you prepare your own baby food or use store-bought baby food. Wash your hands before feeding and use a clean spoon to put small amounts of food from the jar or container into a clean feeding dish. Feeding directly from the jar or container and saving the leftovers can introduce germs into your baby's food and make her sick.

Is your baby “helping” with feedings? Although this is a good sign, it can make feeding a challenge, and messy! This suggestion may help. Use two spoons — one for you to feed with and one for baby to hold. This will help baby practice her skills but expect some food to end up on your baby's face, hands, bib, or beyond. Children learn a lot about food from touching, exploring, and tossing their food. Their food play is an important part of their development and helps them accept new foods and textures.

You and your baby are slowly and steadily working toward the goal of accepting the same foods that the whole family enjoys together!

Building blocks: Baby's cup



The training (sippy or tippy) cup is a training tool to help your baby transition from the nipple to a regular cup.

- Choose a cup that is lightweight and easy for tiny hands to handle when your baby is ready to hold it.
- Choose cup with few parts so they can be cleaned and sanitized easily.
- Avoid cups with valves because baby will have to suck like drinking from a bottle and

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More about baby led weaning

The name is confusing because babies *are not* being weaned from breast milk or formula. They will still get most of their nutrition from breast milk (or infant formula) for their first year of life.

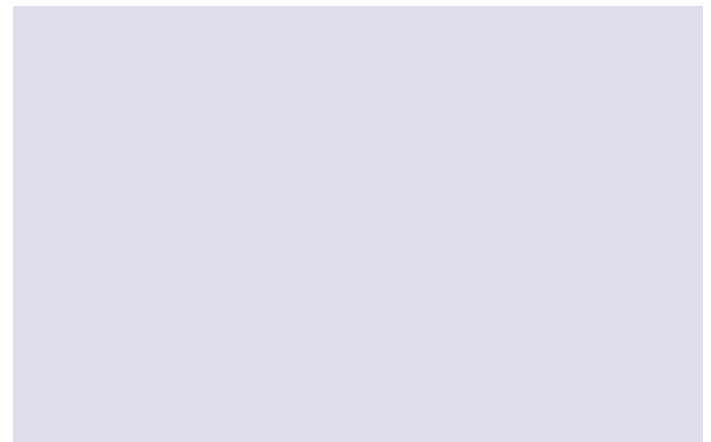
Slowly introducing new foods, tastes, and textures helps your baby develop the skills and confidence to try and accept family foods and become a competent eater.

will not learn how to sip or drink from the cup.

- Offer a cup with breast milk (or formula) and water at mealtimes.
- Offer a cup with water during snack time or in between feedings.
- Wait to offer fruit juice until after your baby turns a year old.

Next month, in month seven, we discuss more things to think about as you add variety to your baby's meals and snacks.

Enjoy the new challenges of feeding your youngest!



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