

# Feeding Our Youngest

## 4 Months

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

Your baby is growing and changing — and these changes tell us it will soon be time to begin some gradual changes in her diet. Although there are no hard and fast rules about when to add solid foods to baby's diet, a gradual start, beginning around age 6 months, is recommended. It is best to let your baby take the lead.

For now, your baby is getting all the nutrition he or she needs from breast milk (or infant formula). You may wonder “How will I know when it is time for my baby to start solid food?” It is better for your baby to wait to start solid foods until she is ready for them. Look for these signs of readiness:

- Sits up with support.
- Holds head steady.
- Opens mouth for spoon.
- Keeps most food in her mouth and swallows.

At age 4 to 5 months, your baby's mouth is developing beyond just sucking — she now is beginning a swallowing pattern. This will help her move food to the back of the tongue and swallow without choking. So very soon will be the right time to gradually introduce first solid foods, such as infant cereal, to baby's diet. Talk to your doctor before starting your baby on solid foods.



### Building Blocks: Will solid foods help my baby sleep through the night?



This question is the reason many parents first think about introducing solid foods to their baby. But the answer is no — it is not solid food, but your baby's growth and development that will gradually allow her to sleep for longer stretches. Often these two milestones occur at about the same time, but adding solid food doesn't help baby to sleep longer.

Research shows that sleeping through the night is associated with mental development, not a full tummy. Infants 2 to 12 months sleep

13 to 14 hours per day — but not all at once. Your 4-month-old is developing a more regular sleeping pattern but expect her to wake 2 to 3 times at night to eat. These nighttime feedings of breast milk (or infant formula) are important for your baby's growth and development.

## Thinking about new foods and allergies

You may be concerned about allergic reactions when your baby starts solid food. Current research says there is no need to delay possible allergenic foods when your baby is ready for solids. New studies have shown that waiting to start potentially allergenic foods may, in fact, set your baby up for allergies. Visit with your health-care provider or WIC (Women, Infants and Children) clinic for more information about the new feeding guidelines.

## Enjoy the ease of feeding your youngest!



Publications from Kansas State University are available at:  
[www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu](http://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu)

Date shown is that of publication or last revision.

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Sandy Procter, Ph.D., RD/LD, and Lisa Martin, MPH, RD/LD, *Feeding Our Youngest: 4 Months*, Kansas State University, August 2021.

### **Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service**

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of K-State Research and Extension, Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts.

**MF3573 August 2021**