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## Introduction to solids

### 1) At what age are solids typically introduced? Why at this age?

Typically solid foods are introduced between 4-6 months of age. At this point, most infants have adequate truncal stability. They have lost the extrusion reflex (pushing the tongue out) and have developed oral motor skills, in particular the ability to push food back to the posterior pharynx. Other clues to a baby's readiness for solids include weight (at least double birth or 13 pounds) and the baby's desire to place objects in his/her mouth. Starting before this age does not provide any known nutritional value and can be harmful (increased risk for food allergies, aspiration, less calories). Starting later can lead to oral aversion.

### 2) What foods do you start with and why?

Cereals are typically the first food of choice. Rice cereal is thought to be the least allergenic. Mixed with breast milk or formula, only a teaspoonful at a time is appropriate to start. Eventually the baby should be fed when happy and parents should be told that they may not be that successful in the beginning. Once solids are introduced, infants should not consume more than 28-32 ounces of formula or breast milk per day.

### 3) What comes next?

Fruits and vegetables are added next. Typically added one at a time, giving 5-7 days between the introduction of the next food. Pureed foods are the initial food of choice. Strained foods are added around 7-8 months of age. Meats are typically added last. Finger foods are typically introduced around 8-10 months of age. Stay away from potential choking hazards: popcorn, hot dogs, nuts, etc.

### 4) What about cow's milk and juice?

Cow's milk is discouraged before one year of age secondary to increased risk of iron deficiency. Juice can be introduced when the infant drinks from a cup (around 6 months). 100 percent fruit juice is preferred and the AAP recommends no more than 4-6 ounces daily, often diluted in H<sub>2</sub>O.

### 5) What about supplements?

**Iron:** After 4-6 months of age, breast-fed babies should receive some supplementation, usually in the form of an iron-fortified cereal (typically 2 ounces daily). Formula fed babies already have iron in their formula. There is no indication for babies to take low iron formulas. Once again, avoid cow's milk until 12 months of age.

**Fluoride:** Check water fluoride levels. If <0.3 ppm then children ages 6 months to 3 years should receive 0.25mg per day

**Vitamins:** Vitamin D for exclusively breast-fed infants, particularly those with dark skin or inadequate exposure to sun. Inadequate is felt to be less than 10-15 minutes per day at least 2 times per week for fair-skinned individuals and 30 minutes per day at least 3 days per week for dark-skinned individuals. It should be discontinued when fortified milk products are introduced.

**References:**

**1. Colorado State University website on nutrition: overall great resource with handouts for families. Introducing solid foods to infants:**

**<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09358.html>**

**2. Up to Date section titled: Introduction of solid foods, vitamins, and minerals**