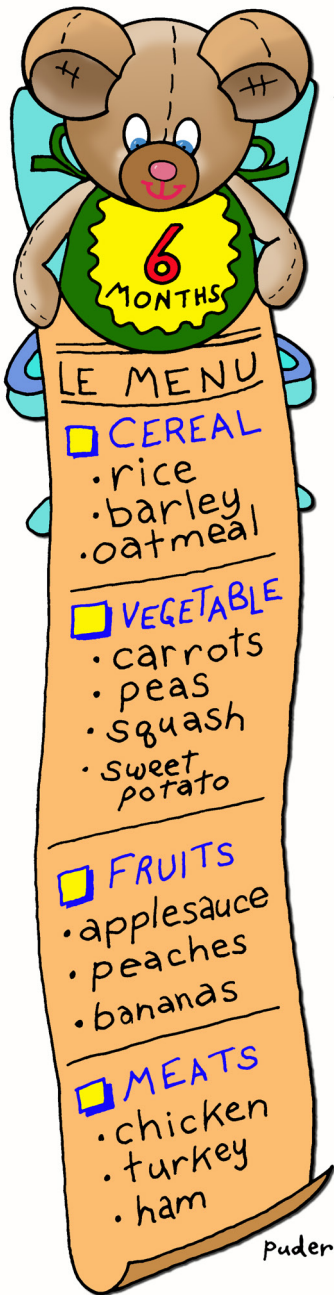


HOW SHOULD I START MY BABY ON SOLID FOODS?

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Breast milk or infant formula provide all of the nutrients that babies need for their first six months. After six months of age solid foods are needed to support healthy growth and development. Do not start any solid foods prior to four months, and try to wait to six months if you can. Don't rush, solid foods do *not* help babies sleep through the night.

Here are a few signals that your baby is ready to start solid foods: Your baby should be able to hold his head upright when the body is supported. Your baby should communicate hunger by leaning forward and opening his mouth as food approaches. He should show he's full by closing his mouth and turning away.

Babies should not be fed in a reclining position. Feed your baby either in a feeding seat or seated with support on your lap. Your baby should be exploring his fingers, hands and fists with interest, and teething.

Mealtime is more than simple nutrition, it is a social and interactive time. There is no best time of day for the first feedings. Choose a time when you are not rushed to sit and feed your baby. Some babies like to start the feeding process with a short breast or bottle feeding to get the swallowing pattern going. Others prefer to eat solids first and finish the feeding with a breast or bottle feed.

The first feedings of solid foods should always be from a spoon. Never place cereal in the bottle. Some babies take their first feed easily, as though they've been feeding for months. For others it is more of a learning process, and it takes a few days before the food ends up in the mouth where it belongs.

Traditionally a single grain cereal is started, but there is no medical evidence that introducing foods in any particular order is better than another. An infant will not dislike vegetables because of starting vegetables or fruits first. At first, most babies prefer the cereal to be soupy, since they're used to taking liquids. As time goes on, the cereal can be thickened by adding a smaller amount of milk. Many babies reject their first spoonfuls because the textures and tastes are new. If the baby keeps refusing, stop and try again in a week.

Babies vary in the amount they take. Some babies are satisfied with a few spoonfuls, others want more. A new single food can be added every few days, but breast milk or formula still provide most of your infant's nutrition. With each new food look for **body rash**, **"colic"**, or **diarrhea**. If none of these three symptoms occur, it is very unlikely that your baby is allergic to the new food.

After introducing cereals, vegetables such as carrots, peas, squash, sweet potatoes, and green beans can be started. Fruits such as applesauce, pears, peaches, bananas, and prunes can follow (avoid citrus fruits or honey until age one). Meats are typically introduced next. It is not important to follow any strict order in starting solid foods. *Enjoy!*

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