

## INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS FOR BABIES



### When to begin?

Introducing solid foods will vary between children, 4 months is generally most suitable to begin. By this age, the digestive tract is mature enough to digest complex proteins, fats and carbohydrates. It is important to remember that solids must be introduced gradually. During this time, an infant's skills will continue to develop. Babies typically learn to grasp a bottle, they are able to express hunger and sit forward when food is presented to them. And at the age of 9 months, the ability to chew solid foods begins to develop.

### Steps to solid foods:

#### 1. Iron-fortified grain cereal.

It is recommended a single-ingredient and **iron-fortified grain cereal** is the first baby's food. The rice-based infant cereal is the first choice since this makes it easy to identify the source of any allergic reaction.

During this age of 4 to 6 months, an infant's own iron stores will be depleted after the iron supplemented from the diet.

The cereal can be mixed with water, or liquid formula. Start with just a teaspoonful in a very liquid form for the first day and progress in volume approximately 2 to 3 teaspoon or 10 to 15 ml once daily. Give the same cereal everyday for a week to ensure that there is no allergic reaction, like any rash, sudden vomiting or diarrhea. If no adverse reaction occurs, may you wish to try a mixed cereal.

#### 2. Vegetables and fruits.

Between the ages of 6 to 7 months, your baby should be ready to start eating vegetables and fruit puree. Again try one kind at a time. Start with a few tablespoons and served twice a day. All vegetables and fruits are good choices, including strained sweet potato, peas, squash, pears, apple and banana. Try a variety of fruits and vegetables, You can alternate one fruit with one vegetable.

### **3. Meat and Alternatives.**

Babies can be introduced to meat and alternatives at the age of 7 to 9 months. It includes pureed meat, fish, poultry, cooked egg yolks, legumes and tofu. Or you can start from commercially prepared strained chicken and beef with broth. These foods are a good source of protein and iron.

### **4. Milk and Milk Products.**

The good first choices include plain yogurt, cottage cheese or grated cheeses, it will be at the age of 7 to 9 months, you can start serving 1 to 2 tablespoons ( 15 to 25 ml ) per day. Milk and milk products provide fat, protein and calcium. Remember homogenized cow's milk can be introduced after 9 months.

Research shows that as many as 2 to 3% of infants have an allergy to cow's milk. Although most grow out of it by the time they are 3 years old. You should check with your child Doctor before placing them on a milk free diet.

Foods to avoid in the six months of life include honey (Honey may contain spores of the bacteria that cause botulism ), milk other than breast milk and formula. And for the allergenic foods, such as tomatoes, orange juice, nuts and chocolate. Avoid adding salt to your baby's food, they don't need it. Once you begin to give solid foods, it's time to offer them water too to help their kidneys to excrete the by-products of these new foods.

When the baby's are able to eat chunkier foods and a more varied diet. You will find that he will finally be on a more predictable feeding schedule. Most of his food can come from the family table, although you will have to cut it in smaller pieces and perhaps grind the meat.

### **What is the difference between commercial and homemade baby's foods ?**

Certainly, commercially prepared foods are more convenient while homemade baby foods, although not really complicated, are nevertheless time-consuming to make. Nutritionally studies have not found any significant differences between commercially or homemade baby foods. Children have grown and developed equally well on both.

Commercially and homemade baby's foods differ only in the additives used; specially in sugar, salt and modified starch. Which are often found in many commercially prepared foods. Check labels for ingredients before buying.

Research shows there is nothing unhealthy about commercially prepared baby's foods, many parents simply prefer to make their own baby's foods. Homemade baby's foods are less expensive and you can choose the ingredients to use. And actually quite simple to make.

So if you decide to make your own baby food, remember to ease up the salt shaker: What may taste bland to you may not taste bland to your infant. The following method may be helpful in preparing your homemade baby's foods.

### **Preparing your own baby's foods with a blender or food processor.**

- Wash your hands carefully before handling the food and equipment. Make sure all the cooking utensils, the cutting board and the blender or food processor are very clean. You can do this by scrubbing all equipment with hot soapy water and rinsing it well.
- Prepare the food from the freshest and the best food available. Wash fruits and vegetables well and remove skins, pits and seeds. And also remove the fats, skin and bones from meat.
- Cook the food by steaming or by boiling in a very small amount of water in a covered pot. Cook until tender.
- Add a cupful of the cooked food to the blender or food processor and puree with just enough of the cooking liquid to allow the blades to spin. You can add more cooking liquid or water if necessary.
- Some foods do not need to be cooked, like fresh peaches, pears and bananas. You can peeled and cut into chunks and then pureeing.
- The pureed food may be served right away and the remaining should be stored carefully for later use.
- To store the pureed food, place the serving-size portions in an ice cube tray, a paper cup-cake liner, or any small container that can be used and safe to put in the refrigerator or freezer. Remember to cover it or put on a plastic wrap before freezing.
- To serve the stored baby's foods, reheat the individual portions. Microwave ovens can be dangerous since they may create hot spots in the cooked food, which can burn the baby's mouth. Be sure to cool the food to a safe temperature before feeding.

## **Time for table foods**

By the age of 8 to 12 months, infants are able to progress from simple pureed to more solid or textured table foods. There is no specific time to make the transition to more textured food, since each child is different.

Very often a parent will know when the child is ready. Sometimes if an infant is able to eat small slices of soft food without choking, then they are ready, ultimately the decision must be with which you are comfortable. But if you have doubts, You can seek the advice of your pediatrician.

## **Self-feeding.**

When an infant can sit stable in the high chair, can put objects into his mouth, has begun chewing motion, can hold a bottle by himself, your baby may be ready to help feed himself. Though the process may be much slower and definitely messier than your feeding him.

Feeding himself helps to stimulate all his senses and provide learning experience, how and what the taste, smell, texture and temperature of the foods are. He will enjoy the bright colors of different varieties of foods to satisfy his hunger. While we cannot be expected to feed himself all the foods at this stage, you can still help him to eat the rest of his meal.

**These are the finger foods during this period of transition;** It includes those that dissolve easily in the mouth, such as the following:

- Small pieces of toast
- Small pieces of cooked vegetables, like peas, squash, soft green beans and broccoli
- Small pieces of very soft meat, such as chicken and fish without bones.
- Scrambled eggs ( unless there is a history of allergy )
- Small pieces of ripe fruits like banana or pears
- Small pieces of soft cheese, unless there is a milk allergy.
- Cheerios or puffed rice.

**Do not offer the following foods during the first year to avoid choking.**

- Any dried fruits; such as raisins, dates, pineapple and coconut.
- Any kind of nuts. Like peanuts or walnuts
- Popcorn, potato chips and crackers that do not dissolve well.
- Any kind of hard candies.
- Uncooked vegetables; like carrots and celery
- And other foods that might be of windpipe size.

Children should always be supervised while eating. Do not allow toddlers to walk or run with food in their mouth. Eating in the car is also considered unsafe for young children, because when there is unexpected motion such as a sudden stop, it will also cause choking.

**Mealtime** makes it for creativity and patience on our part as parents. Toddlers need foods that can be easily eaten by themselves. Their appetite is not large, so take advantage of snack time to provide the nutritious foods.

Each new stage of development offers new feeding challenges to parents. Remember that by providing your children nutritious foods, prepared and portioned in a way that is appropriate for their age, you are doing the very best to help them to be healthy.

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