

STARTING MY BABY ON FOOD

Signs that a baby is ready for food:

- Double birth weight AND over 13 pounds
- Good head control
- Interest in food (tries to eat your food)
- At 6 months, or sooner if you've discussed with doctor

1. **Breast milk or formula has all the nutrients that a baby needs until they are 6 months old.** Starting food too early may cause problems like allergies, constipation, diarrhea or gas and may promote obesity. Food given before a baby is ready may not be well digested. Breast milk and formula are specially designed to allow the baby to digest it easily.
2. Start with 1 meal per day, at a time of day when you are relaxed. An ideal time is about 1 hour before the baby usually eats so s/he is hungry but not starving. Meals should be fun, but may also be messy and time consuming, so be prepared.
3. It is fine to make your own baby food, but may be difficult to get foods as smooth as "first foods" or "Stage 1" foods. All utensils should be clean, food fresh and properly cooked. Consider using organic fruits and vegetables if you are preparing them yourself
4. Babies don't need juice. Use it to mix with cereal only, but for this purpose it's better to use breast milk, or water..

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:

- **Keep it simple:** infant cereals (rice, oatmeal, or barley) fruits and vegetables
- Use only **single ingredient** foods. Read the label.
- Start foods **one at a time** and give each new food for a couple of days before introducing the next new food. Once you have established a few foods, it's ok to mix them. A bad reaction to a new food would be vomiting, diarrhea, or a new rash.
- **NEVER put food in the bottle.** If the baby is ready for food, s/he is ready to eat it from a spoon.
- **NEVER add salt, sugar, butter, etc.** Read labels to make sure these are not added.
- **It doesn't matter** what order you offer new foods to your baby; I have textbooks & articles and generations of grandparents!) that recommend every imaginable order – it all works ok, so don't over-think this.

Remember that with all the new food, the resultant bowel movements will be a new adventure.

For the first year, **avoid:** honey, nuts and peanut butter, chocolate and milk and choking hazards (hot dogs, popcorn, nuts, hard candy, seeds, raw veggies, any hard to chew food).