Starting Family Foods
Introducing your baby to solid foods

FOR PARENTS OF BABIES BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS

8. ALLERGIES

Solid foods can be offered in any order and rate, as long as iron-rich foods are offered first.

If allergies are a problem in your family seek advice from a health professional. The following foods are more commonly associated with allergies in babies: milk, eggs, seafood/fish, nuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy, and wheat. There is no need to delay introduction of these foods after 6 months, unless advised by a Doctor or Dietitian.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information:

Child Health and Family Services:
For service locations throughout NSW, visit: www.health.nsw.gov.au.

Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA):
Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268
www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Tresillian 24-hour Parents Helpline:
(02) 9787 0855 or 1800 637 357
(free call outside Sydney metropolitan area)
www.tresillian.net

Karitane Care Line:
1300 227 464 or (02) 9744 2350
www.karitane.org.au

Mothersafe. Medications in Pregnancy and Lactation Service:
Phone: (02) 9892 6539 or 1800 647 848
(free call outside Sydney metropolitan area)

Personal Health Record (known as the ‘Blue Book’):
www.health.nsw.gov.au

References:

• Infant Feeding Guidelines NHMRC 2012
• Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement NHMRC 2011
• Australian Dietary Guidelines NHMRC 2013

FOR PARENTS OF BABIES BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS

FROM 2 MONTHS

7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

Honey: Can have bacteria in it which can cause severe illness (botulism) in infants under 12 months old.

Nuts: Babies can choke on nuts and other small, hard foods. Nuts can be included in family foods and in cooking.

Cow’s Milk: Is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Use breastmilk or infant formula.

Milk from other animal sources:

E.g. goat’s and sheep’s milk, is not recommended as baby’s main milk until after 12 months. Children can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).

Plant-based milks:

E.g. soy, rice, oat, coconut, and almond milks, do not provide enough nutrition for babies under 12 months. Children can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).

Caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks:

Do not offer babies coffee or sugar sweetened drinks (e.g. soft drinks, cordials, energy drinks).
1. WHY WAIT UNTIL AROUND 6 MONTHS BEFORE INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS?

Both the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement (2011) recommend introducing solid foods around 6 months. There are no benefits to starting solids foods before around 6 months. Introducing solid foods too early can cause problems such as:

- Less breastmilk production
- More exposure to germs
- Issues for your baby's kidneys
- Constipation, from poor digestion

If you feel your baby needs to start solids before 6 months of age, talk to your local Child and Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner. See 9. ‘Further information’.

2. THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS

First foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits your baby, as long as iron-rich foods (*) are included. See ‘Around 6 months’ for information about iron-rich foods.

Babies can use foods with high levels of saturated fat, sugar, or salt (e.g. cakes, biscuits, lollies, chocolate and potato chips).

Babies have very sensitive taste buds at this stage and don’t need salt, sugar or fat added to their food. Some babies may not like the taste of new foods at first. They may need to try foods many times before they learn to like them.

Avoid foods with high levels of saturated fat, sugar, or salt (e.g. cakes, biscuits, lollies, chocolate and potato chips).

3. SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE

Eating safely

As babies are more likely to choke on food than an adult, it is important:

- To watch them while they are eating
- Not to let them move around while they are eating
- To use a safety harness when your baby is in a high chair or low chair
- Not to give them nuts, small hard foods (such as raw or undercooked pieces of hard fruit and vegetables, popcorn, rice cakes and chocolate frankfurts) and small slippery foods (such as whole grapes and whole cherry tomatoes)

If you mix water with baby foods, boil and cool it first. After heating food, always mix it well and test its temperature before offering it to your baby.

4. FINGER FOODS

Babies will begin to actively explore their world and this is a great time to take advantage of their growing interest in food. Babies need to practice before they can eat family foods. Offer lots of different foods for your baby to practice eating, in different sizes and textures. Exploring, holding and chewing food helps babies to enjoy eating and develop social skills.

Babies like foods that they can pick up with their hands and eat by themselves. Wash your baby’s hands with warm soapy water first.

Tips

1. Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot circles, zucchini strips, beans, peas or slices of beetroot. Hard vegetables need to be well cooked and offered as large chunks.
2. Raw foods – whole small banana, tomato slices, a small ripe pear, a small whole orange, peeled.
3. Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing and eating with their hands. Home prepared food can be just as convenient. Food can be cooked, mashed and frozen in ice cube trays for single serves. Some baby food products marketed for babies (e.g. baby custards/yoghurts/pureed fruit) are no more suitable than regular products.

5. COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS

These can be useful, but:

- They are more expensive than home cooked foods.
- They may lack taste and smell different from family foods. This means babies won’t learn as much about the foods the rest of the family eats.
- Babies may not want to change to family foods if they eat too many commercial foods.
- Babies won’t learn as much about food (look, smell, texture and feel) if they have too many ‘squeezie’ food pouches. Too much sucking from these pouches can cause tooth decay and affect speech development.
- Home prepared food can be just as convenient. Food can be cooked, mashed and frozen in ice cube trays for single serves.
- Many food products marketed for babies (e.g. baby custards/yoghurts/pureed fruit) are no more suitable than regular products.

6. WHAT ELSE?

Sleep

It is common for children to wake once or twice per night, even into their second year. There is no evidence that introducing solids early will help your baby sleep longer at night.

Weight

Smaller babies do not need to start solids early to help them gain weight more quickly. Larger babies do not need to start solids early in order to keep growing well. Breastmilk provides all the nutrients a healthy baby needs for around the first 6 months of life, whatever their size.

How much food?

All babies are different. Some love eating and it will take longer for others to want more than just a taste. If you keep offering lots of different healthy foods, your baby will eat as much as they need. Remember, milk is still a very important food for babies for at least the first 12 months.

Fussy eaters

Almost all babies will learn to accept family foods if they are offered in a positive, friendly way. If you have any concerns, talk to your local Child and Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner.