

## **AN EXCITING NEW JOURNEY: INTRODUCING BABY'S FIRST FOODS**

Most babies are physiologically and developmentally **ready for solid foods by 6 months**. Moreover, they will display not just their readiness but also their interest in eating through various, obvious ways.

For instance, you might notice that your baby is now eager to join the family at the dining table. Aside from drinking the [best milk product for brain development](#) from her bottle, she may have developed the habit of putting things into her mouth. Or, whenever you're eating, she may longingly stare at you – or at your food – while you enjoy your meal!

As you introduce solid foods to your baby, remember the following tips from early childhood [nutrition advisors](#):

### **First Steps to Solids**

**Take small steps.** If you're [introducing solid foods](#), start with one type of food at a time before offering a new one. Your baby's first bites will begin with just a serving of one teaspoon or less. That's fine, as the servings will gradually increase as she gets used to eating and as her appetite develops.

**Grab the learning opportunity.** Mix spoon-fed meals with finger foods. Cut food into manageable bite-size pieces, put it in front of her and let her have fun feeding herself. It's good practice for her gross and fine motor skills, and a great way to make her feel more involved in this new experience.

**Simple is smart.** Rather than buying baby food in jars or pouches, start with fresh, unprocessed food – and opt for plain vegetables over fruits, which are often sweet. Research suggests that doing so will help your baby have an easier time embracing different flavors (bitter, sour, salty, etc.) in the long term.

**A word on allergies.** In the past, doctors recommend waiting until after the first year to introduce potentially allergenic foods such as peanuts, eggs and seafood. This guideline has been revised as recent research suggests introducing those foods as early as 6 months may actually help prevent food allergies. Consult your pediatrician to know which route is best for your baby.

### **Best First Foods**

Your baby can now eat a wider variety of foods and beverages. But remember that the first and most important food she enjoyed since birth should still be a top mainstay in her meals: milk.

**Breast milk is a superior source of calcium, protein, omega-3** and other essential nutrients that your child needs to reach her growth milestones. As such, it is your best option.

Meanwhile, some of the **yummiest and most nutritious first solid foods** you can offer your 6-month-old baby include:

1. **Avocado** – New studies suggest avocado as the “ideal first food” for babies. This superfood's flavor offers a mix of moderately sweet and bitter, and its texture makes chewing and swallowing easy for newbie eaters. Most importantly, it has impressive nutritional properties – low in sugar but energy-dense to stimulate baby's growth. Avocados can be given to babies as one of the first solid foods they eat between 6 months.
2. **Green vegetables** – Green veggies are rich in nutrients, and compared to yellow/orange vegetables, are less sweet and therefore can open baby's palate to a wider range of flavor profiles. Broccoli, a great source of fiber, calcium and folate, can be steamed and mashed, or cut into mini-florets once baby gets the hang of finger foods. You can give this veggie to your baby once she turns eight months old. Asparagus, green beans, peas and spinach are likewise highly recommended. You can introduce soft, pureed green beans, peas, and spinach between ages 6 and 8 months and asparagus at 10 months.
3. **Sweet potato, carrot, and squash** – These vegetable cousins are packed with beta-carotene, vitamin C and iron and are popular first solids based on flavor, nutritional value, and their baby-friendly consistency when

cooked. To prepare, boil or steam until super soft. Then, puree or mash well. You may add some liquid to achieve a runny consistency. Since they are soft, they can be part of a 6-month-old baby's first diet.

4. **Meat** – Red meat and poultry provide your baby essential nutrients for brain development and much-needed protein for muscle growth, iron for red blood cells and zinc for strengthened immunity. For a first taste, you may cook turkey or chicken and puree it using natural broth for the liquid. You can introduce pureed or small pieces of tender meat to your baby's diet between 6 and 8 months.
5. **Yoghurt** – It's rich in calcium, vitamin D and live cultures that boost your baby's digestive health. Choose the plain, unsweetened variety and let your baby enjoy it as is. Or, it can be used as a smoothie base mixed with her milk for a creamier mix. You may also add various toppings (one at a time first), such as fruit, no-sugar jam or applesauce. You can feed your baby yoghurt when she turns 6 months old.

### **Starting Early with Eating Well**

Your baby's journey to eating solid foods is an exciting, wonderful time of learning and discovery. But it can also be a nerve-wracking one as well.

What your baby eats now has a profound impact on her eating behaviors, habits and preferences for life. As such, it's important to feed your baby right today so she can benefit from eating well in the years to come.