

Pediatric Associates of NYC

Starting Solids

There is no need to start solids before 6 months of age, however solids can be started between 4 and 6 months, depending on a baby's readiness.

Signs that a baby is ready to start solids

- They imitate their caregiver (open their mouth) and stare at food (watch you eat)
- They reach for food on your plate- grasp and pull things towards their mouth
- They become unsatisfied after eating/shortening the interval between feedings
- Have the ability to turn away when they have eaten enough- an important cue.
- They are able to sit with support (ie in a high chair)

Why wait until 4 months?

- A baby's intestines needs time to mature
- Babies have an *extrusion reflex*. If they are not ready to take solids, as food touches the tip of their tongue, they will push it out rather than swallow it. This disappears between 4-7 months.

How do you do it?

- Between 4-6 months of age, solids supplement breast milk or formula.
- After 6 months of age, a gradual decrease in the amount of breast milk/formula is expected
- For breastfed babies, it is important to provide iron rich foods after 6 months of age (includes baby cereals and pureed meats)
- Start with one meal in the morning, when babies are most interactive, hungriest and you can monitor for signs of allergy.
- Wait 3-4 days in between each new food that you introduce.
- Don't rush: feeding is also a social experience.
- Feed babies until THEY tell you they are done. Do not force feed or use distraction.
- Babies do not overeat, if they want more, give them more (even if it seems like too much)
- Start with rice cereal or oatmeal and wait 3-4 days in between each new food.
- Expect stool patterns to change
- The order of foods that are introduced does not matter
- Be flexible! A baby's appetite may vary day to day. Never force feed and expect a mess. This will teach baby's to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full.

Avoiding peanut allergies:

Based on new research (2016), the introduction of peanuts around the age of 6 months, after a few other foods have been introduced (fruits, vegetables, infant cereal), is associated with a significantly reduced risk of developing a peanut allergy. Peanuts should be introduced in an age appropriate form such as peanut butter or Bamba, a peanut flavored puffed snack food. For infants with severe eczema and/or an egg allergy, discuss specifics of how to introduce peanuts to your baby with your pediatrician.

Possible signs of allergy

- Hives/severe eczema is the most common
- Vomiting specifically associated with a particular food
- Red rash/blistering rash around anus

What foods and when?

4-6 months: baby cereal, 'stage 1' fruits/vegetables

6-9 months: 'stage 2' fruits/vegetables, yogurt, pureed meats, peanut butter/nut butters

9 months: table foods plus purees, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, cheerios. Mild spices are ok

1 year: anything and everything (provided it is not a choking hazard- whole grapes, hot dogs, hard nuts...)