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# Introducing Solids

At around six months of age, your baby will become increasingly curious about food and will be ready to experience a variety of different foods to complement their milk intake.

## How will you know your baby is ready for solid food?

Around six months you may notice some of the following behaviours:

- Your baby has the ability to sit more upright: this requires good head, neck and shoulder control
- Showing interest in food. This includes the food on your plate!
- Having an increased appetite e.g. your baby is requiring more frequent breastfeeds or bottle feeds
- An increase in hand-to-mouth behaviour; this includes putting toys in mouth
- Your baby opens their mouth when you offer them food

## How to Introduce Your Baby to Solids

Introducing your baby to solid food can be great fun as you share their reaction to this new experience of different textures and flavours.

When you first offer solid food to your baby, their milk (either breast or infant formula) remains the most important part of their diet and is best offered before their solid food. You may like to start with a small unbreakable bowl and a small plastic or silicon baby spoon. Some babies start by sucking the food off the spoon.

## Start with one meal a day

- Start with small amounts (1 tablespoon) of one food (4 teaspoons = 1 tablespoon)
- Increase each day until your baby is taking 2 tablespoons
- When taking 2 tablespoons, you can start offering your baby 2 meals a day
- Ensure you stay with your baby throughout all meals

## What to offer

As long as iron-rich foods are included, foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits your baby. Examples of foods with iron include fortified rice cereal, pureed meat, poultry, fish and liver or cooked tofu and legumes. Vegetables, fruits and dairy products such as full fat yoghurt, cheese and custard can also be offered in small amounts. The above table is only an example of the sequence and amounts to give and would be different for each family. Remember, never force your baby to take food. Offering solid food is about your baby learning with you to develop chewing and swallowing skills, what hungry and full feelings are, how to manage 'gagging' and importantly, the value of social interaction during feeding.

## Foods To Offer

Often the food you first offer your baby will be dependent on your cultural background and family.

Age	Suggested progression
<b>Around 6 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start with one meal per day</li> <li>• As long as iron-rich foods are included, first foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits your baby</li> <li>• Some babies are happy on one meal a day while others will quickly indicate they are ready for two</li> <li>• Remember to offer a breastfeed or infant formula before solid foods</li> </ul>
<b>7 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By this age some babies are on two meals a day while some may be enjoying three meals</li> <li>• Continue to increase the amount and variety of foods; allow your baby's engaging and disengaging cues during meal times to guide how much you offer them to eat</li> <li>• The texture of the pureed food offered can now be thicker; your baby may like to touch and explore the food</li> <li>• Continue to offer a breastfeed or infant formula before solid foods</li> </ul>
<b>8-9 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most babies are enjoying three meals a day</li> <li>• Continue to increase the amount, variety and texture of foods guided by your baby's cues. e.g. fork mashed foods and steamed vegetable pieces, soft fruit pieces, strips of soft meat</li> <li>• Your baby will enjoy having their own spoon to hold at meal times and experiencing finger foods</li> <li>• At this time some parents choose to offer solids first then milk feed after</li> </ul>

## My baby is refusing solid foods

Not all babies are ready to start eating solid foods. You may need to be flexible and consider your baby's own temperament. Remember, the interaction around feeding is about helping your baby learn about new tastes, textures and smells and the pattern of signalling, telling you they are ready for a mouthful, feeling full and socialising too! To improve the situation try reducing distractions (i.e. turn off the television), offering food before giving a milk feed, considering the whole days activities and making

sure you're facing your baby during meal time. If your baby refuses something one day remember it can take many times of looking, touching, tasting or smelling before they choose to eat it.

## Commercial baby foods

While fresh home-prepared baby food is by far the best for your baby, it is not always convenient to prepare or available. Commercial baby food can be a useful stop-gap for some busy parents. If you can, it is better for your baby to offer these types of food using a spoon.



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