

Introducing Solids



The First **26** Weeks & Beyond

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Introduction

The information in this brochure focuses on the introduction of solids. You may be breast feeding, expressing breast milk or formula feeding which you have decided with your health care professional. The brochure will refer to your baby's usual milk and will depend on your individual situation.

Weaning, or introducing solids, is an exciting stage in your baby's development. This period signifies the transition from baby's dependence on their usual milk to the gradual introduction of small amounts of other types of food or 'solids'. Your baby's usual milk should be continued during this period as it is still a major source of nutrition for your baby. Full cream cow's milk can be introduced as a main milk drink from 12 months of age.

Introducing solids is an opportunity to help support your child's healthy eating habits. Rapid growth in childhood requires good nourishment, and a well-balanced diet may help reduce the risk of many diet-related diseases. Like adults, older babies need to have food from several food groups to ensure adequate intake of nutrients. By starting with a healthy and balanced diet, your baby will benefit at each stage of their development.

This brochure offers guidance on when and how to introduce solids, as well as provides some delicious recipes for you to try at home. Enjoy this time with your baby, and remember that you can always seek advice from your child health nurse or doctor if you have any questions.



When to Introduce Solids

Australian guidelines recommend that solids be introduced at around 6 months of age. Introducing solids too soon is not recommended, and introducing solids later than 6 months could mean your baby is missing out on vital nutrients, such as iron and zinc.

Signs of readiness for solids

Every baby is unique and will develop in their own time. However, there are some signs that may indicate a baby is ready to eat solid food, such as when they:

- suck their fingers or fists
- can hold their head steady
- can sit with some support
- have lost their “tongue thrust” reflex
- show signs of appetite changes
- become more interested in your food
- seem less satisfied with milk feeds alone.

What about allergies?

Current guidelines do not support the theory that delaying introduction of solid food helps to reduce the risk of allergy. For the majority of infants, cow’s milk, egg whites and wheat are not highly allergenic. Although, they are the foods most likely to cause an allergic reaction in susceptible infants.

Signs of a reaction may include skin rash, swelling, vomiting, eczema, breathing difficulty or tongue swelling, and becoming pale and floppy. Seek immediate medical assistance if your baby shows these or any other signs. For babies with a family history of allergy, it is best to consult with a healthcare professional before introducing solids.

How to Introduce Solids

Apart from introducing iron-rich foods first, there are no other recommendations for the order in which foods should be introduced, or the number of new foods that can be introduced at a time. As your baby shows signs of enjoying and tolerating what you are offering, you can extend the variety of solid foods.

How much your baby accepts will depend on how ready they are. Babies who are not developmentally ready will need practice to deal with new textures. Your baby's developmental stage will be a guide for you to offer foods of an appropriate texture and consistency. Some babies accept a lot when they first taste solid food, and others just a little. Allow your baby to set their own pace; there is no hurry.

Some babies quickly progress to 3 meals a day, while others take many weeks. Be guided by their usual milk intake – if they are still taking the required daily amount and enjoying solids as well, provide as much of their usual milk as desired. If they are at this stage, solids should be offered after your baby has had their usual milk feed. It is important to continue their usual milk feeds until at least 12 months of age.

What Foods to Start With

Iron-rich foods are best to start with. The order and number of new foods being introduced is not as important as their nutritional content and texture. Food consistency should range from puréed to lumpy.



Progression of solid foods with age

Once your child has been introduced to puréed foods, you may progress to mashed foods, followed by minced and chopped foods. As your child gets older and grows, you can introduce foods with different textures and consistencies that are appropriate for their developmental age.

From around 6 months:



Start with iron-rich foods like:

- enriched/fortified rice cereal mixed with a little of your baby's usual milk
- puréed meat, poultry and fish
- puréed cooked tofu and legumes.

You can also try:

- some fruits such as mashed banana or avocado, or cooked and puréed apple, pear, apricot or peach
- cooked vegetables such as puréed pumpkin, potato, zucchini and sweet potato
- dairy products such as full-fat yoghurt and custard (be mindful that commercially produced yoghurt and custards may be high in sugar – read the nutritional information on the pack if you are unsure).

By 8 months:



Once your baby is managing minced foods well, try:

- pieces of food or finger foods such as small slices of toast, rusks, soft pieces of fruit, small pieces of full-fat cheese and small pieces of cooked pasta.

By 12 months:



- Your baby should be eating a wide variety of foods, and can eat healthy choices from the foods eaten by the rest of the family.

DOs and DON'Ts

- ✓ **DO** freeze freshly prepared foods in ice cube trays to use at a later date, and thaw only the amount you need.
- ✓ **DO** store foods in air-tight plastic bags or small containers.
- ✗ **DON'T** offer your baby tea (including herbal tea), coffee, carbonated drinks or cordial. These have no nutritional benefits and may be harmful.
- ✗ **DON'T** give honey to infants aged less than 12 months. It can contain harmful spores of *Clostridium Botulinum*.
- ✗ **DON'T** add salt or sugar to your baby's food. Babies have very sensitive taste buds and adding unnecessary seasoning can set up poor eating habits later in life.



Caution: Using Microwaves

Take special care when using a microwave oven to warm your baby's food. Microwaves can heat unevenly. So, while food may feel cold in the middle, it can become very hot on the outside edges of the bowl.

If you do plan to use a microwave, take the following precautions:

- make sure the bowl is labelled "microwave oven safe"
- heat the food in short bursts of 5 to 10 seconds; it is very easy to overheat small volumes of food
- mix the food thoroughly after heating and check the temperature before feeding
- take extra care when using a microwave you are not familiar with (e.g. when heating food at a friend's home).

When to Introduce Cow's Milk

Australian guidelines do not recommend regular cow's milk as the primary milk drink until your baby is at least 1 year of age. However, small quantities of regular, full-cream cow's milk may be used in cooking or when mixing cereal for your baby.

Regular cow's milk contains very little iron, an essential mineral for babies in the first year. Iron carries oxygen in the bloodstream and is essential for supporting growth. By 6 months of age, the iron that was stored before birth begins to deplete. That's why it is important to include iron-rich foods in your child's diet, to minimise the risk of iron deficiency.

Regular cow's milk is also low in other important vitamins and nutrients, including vitamin C and essential fatty acids. It also contains too much sodium (salt) for babies.



Recipes

On the following pages are some recipes appropriate for different stages of your baby's development. The earlier recipes can still be used when your baby is older, simply by eliminating the final purée step so that the consistency is more suitable. This will ensure that your baby has an increasing variety of foods.

Note

Your child's usual milk can be used when preparing these recipes.

Puréed Foods (From around 6 Months)

Solids should be introduced in very small amounts when starting. The sensation of the spoon and the tastes and textures of solid food may seem strange to your baby. Make sure your baby is sitting comfortably, either on your lap or strapped into a high chair. Avoid offering them solid food when they are very hungry or distressed.

Don't force feed if your baby spits the food out or gets upset. Simply try again the next day. Be sensitive to your baby's cues and signals, and let them control how much they eat. If a rash, tummy upset or wheezing occurs after trying a new food, remove it from your baby's diet and seek medical advice.

The volume of your child's usual milk required to create a purée of the correct consistency will vary with different foods, depending on the size of the portion. All early solids need to be very moist.

BANANA RICE CEREAL

180 mL **usual milk**
2 tbsp **iron-fortified rice cereal**
1 medium **ripe banana, puréed**
 few drops of lemon juice

Pour milk into saucepan. Add rice cereal and heat until thickened. Purée banana with a little lemon juice. Add to mixture, stir through and serve immediately.

Tip:

- Substitute banana with other fruits, such as puréed peach, pear or apple.

PEAR RICE PURÉE

180 mL	usual milk
2 tbsp	iron-fortified rice cereal
100 g	canned pear, drained or
1 pc	ripe pear, cooked and puréed



Pour milk into saucepan. Add rice cereal and heat until thickened. Stir through puréed pear and serve.

BEEF AND VEGETABLE PURÉE

¼ cup	carrot, peeled and diced
¼ cup	sweet potato, peeled and diced
¼ cup	peas, frozen
¼ cup	corn kernels
½ cup	lean beef, cooked



In a saucepan with simmering water, add carrot, sweet potato, peas and corn. Cook until vegetables are tender, and reserve the liquid. Put beef and vegetables into a food processor and pulse until puréed.

Tip:

- If required, add some of the reserved liquid to the purée.

Lumpy and Minced Foods

As your baby develops and becomes more accustomed to eating solids, you can introduce new textures such as lumpy and minced foods. This is also a good time to include a wider variety of foods. Although many of the foods you offer at this stage may seem bland, avoid the temptation to add sugar or salt.

Aim to make food look attractive by serving it in colourful dishes to keep babies interested. Most babies at this age will want to try feeding themselves. Share this experience with your baby by offering them another spoon to practice eating with. Although this can be quite messy, it's an important part of their learning process and needs encouragement. It may be a good idea to put a plastic sheet under your baby's high chair to protect your floor from spilled or flying food.

You may choose to cook your own, or feed your baby commercially produced food. Many parents use a combination of both.

PUMPKIN, SWEET POTATO AND COUSCOUS SOUP

125 g	pumpkin, peeled and diced into 2 cm cubes
100 g	sweet potato, peeled and diced into 2 cm cubes
½ small	onion, peeled and diced
1 medium	tomato, diced or 2 tsp tomato paste
185 mL	diluted chicken or vegetable stock
¼ tsp	ground cumin (optional)
65 mL	usual milk or natural yoghurt
2 tbsp	cooked couscous

Put pumpkin, sweet potato, onion, tomato, stock and cumin in a medium pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15–20 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Purée mixture in a food processor until you achieve appropriate consistency. Stir in milk or yoghurt and couscous, let stand for 5 minutes to thicken.



VEGGIE PURÉE WITH CHEESE

½ cup	vegetable purée (see page 13, leaving out beef)
1 tbsp	cheese (mozzarella, cottage, ricotta or mild grated cheddar)
1 tsp	parsley, finely chopped

While the purée is warm, stir through cheese and parsley.

FISH & PARSLEY PURÉE

250 g	fish fillet, boneless and skin removed
120 mL	usual milk
1 tsp	parsley, finely chopped

Place fish fillet in a pan. Combine milk with parsley and pour over fish. Simmer until soft cooked. Blend to appropriate consistency.

CREAMY CHICKEN AND BROCCOLI

100 g	chicken breast
1 cup	diluted chicken stock (or just water, if you prefer)
½ cup	broccoli, cut into small florets



For cheese sauce:

2 tbsp	margarine
2 tbsp	plain flour
300 mL	usual milk
5 tbsp	cheese, grated



Cut chicken into chunks and poach in the liquid for about 6 minutes or until cooked through. Meanwhile, steam broccoli until tender (about 5 minutes).

To make cheese sauce, melt margarine in a saucepan, stir in flour and cook for 1 minute. Gradually whisk in milk, bring to the boil, and cook until the sauce has thickened and continue stirring. Remove from heat and stir in cheese until melted.

Combine cooked chicken, broccoli and cheese sauce, and blend to desired consistency.

BANANA CUSTARD

120 mL	usual milk
2 tsp	custard powder
	few drops of vanilla
1 medium	ripe banana, mashed
	few drops of lemon juice

Mix milk, custard powder and vanilla together in a microwave-proof bowl. Cook on high for about 2 minutes, stirring halfway. Cool custard mixture. Mash banana with lemon juice. Stir through custard and serve immediately.

Tip:

- Substitute with other fruits, such as puréed peach, pear or apple.

BEEF AND VEGGIE BOLOGNESE

1 tsp	margarine or canola oil
½ small	baby eggplant, skin on and finely diced
¼	onion, finely diced
60 g	lean beef mince
1 cup	grated or finely diced vegetables (e.g. carrot, pumpkin, peas, chopped broccoli or cauliflower florets)
⅓ cup	diluted beef stock or water
1½ tbsp	tomato paste
1 tbsp	finely chopped fresh basil or ½ tsp dried basil
¼ cup	small shaped pasta
2 tbsp	usual milk
1–2 tbsp	grated cheese

Melt margarine or oil in a non-stick pan over moderately high heat and cook eggplant and onion for 3–4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add mince and cook 3–4 minutes or until browned. Add vegetables, stock or water, tomato paste and basil. Cover and simmer on low heat for 8–10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, cook pasta according to packet instructions until soft. Drain and stir through milk. Serve sauce over pasta or combine them. Sprinkle cheese on top before serving.

Tip:

- Put in heatproof dish and grill to melt cheese.

FRUITY PORRIDGE

¼ cup	quick-cook oats
180 mL	usual milk (more if necessary)
	puréed fruit

Cook oats and milk together over gentle heat, stirring until it thickens and looks creamy (about 5 minutes). Add any combination of puréed fruit.



Chopped and Finger Foods

Around 8 months old, your baby should be fairly accustomed to eating solid foods. This is important because chewing different textures is an important step in their speech development. While your baby's usual milk will remain an important part of their diet, more solids may be eaten at meal times, the amount of milk they drink will gradually reduce.

If your baby handles minced foods well, you can offer small pieces of food like fingers of toast, unsweetened rusks, crackers or savoury biscuits (low-salt variety). Slices of ripe banana or pieces of pear and orange (with membrane and pips removed) are also great finger foods. Your baby will become increasingly interested in foods and want to take part in family meals. Encourage and support them and try to have some meals together each day.



Caution: Choking Hazards

Never leave your baby alone while eating, or allow them to move around with finger foods. Also avoid offering small, hard pieces of food such as whole nuts, seeds or hard carrots unsupervised.

SPECIAL SCRAMBLIES

- 1** **egg yolk**
- 1 tbsp** **ricotta cheese (or feta cheese)**
- 2 tbsp** **usual milk**
- margarine or canola oil**

Beat the egg slightly. Add the ricotta and break up with a fork. Add the milk and mix thoroughly.

Heat a small amount of margarine or oil in a non-stick fry pan. Pour in egg mixture and cook on medium heat, stirring only as the base sets. Be careful not to overcook. The mixture will not set as firmly as regular eggs, but will be very creamy.

Tip:

- Serve with toast fingers.

CHEEKY CHICKEN SOUP

- 2 tsp margarine or canola oil
- 2 pcs potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 small leek, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 2 cups diluted vegetable or chicken stock (preferably low-salt variety)
- 1 pc skinless chicken breast, cooked and finely chopped
- ½ cup barley

Heat margarine or oil in a fry pan or saucepan. Add vegetables and sauté until soft. Add stock, chicken and barley, and simmer very gently for 20 minutes.



VEGGIE RISOTTO BAKE

- 1 tbsp canola or olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped (optional)
- 2 cups Arborio rice (risotto rice)
- 4 cups diluted vegetable stock
- 4 cups chopped vegetables (e.g. carrots, peas, squash and mushrooms)
- ½ cup usual milk
- ½ cup cheddar cheese
- 1 tbsp margarine
- ½ cup breadcrumbs

Pre-heat oven to 200°C. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large pan and sauté onion and garlic for about 1 minute or until lightly browned. Add rice, stirring for 1 minute. Add stock and simmer covered for 10 minutes. Stir in vegetables and milk, and simmer for a further 5 minutes.

Spoon mixture into an oven-proof dish, and top with cheddar cheese. Rub margarine into breadcrumbs and sprinkle over the top. Bake at 200°C for 10 minutes, until lightly golden.



MEATBALLS

400 g	chopped tomatoes, canned
500 g	lean mince (beef, lamb or chicken)
1 tsp	tomato paste
1 tbsp	chopped basil or ½ tsp dried basil
1 piece	wholemeal bread, whizzed in the blender into breadcrumbs
1	egg yolk
1 small	onion, finely chopped
	canola or olive oil spray



Heat chopped tomatoes in a pan for 10 minutes until thickened, set aside. Using clean hands, mix all remaining ingredients together in a large bowl. With wet hands, roll into little balls (about the size of walnuts).

Spray a non-stick fry pan with oil spray. Add the meatballs and cook on all sides, until golden brown and cooked through. As long as the meatballs are quite small, they will cook in about 10–15 minutes. Cut one open and check to make sure before you take them off the heat. Once cooked, add tomatoes and heat through.

Tip:

- Serve meatballs and sauce on creamy mashed potato or cooked pasta.

TOP TIP

For the rest of the family:

shape the mixture into slightly larger meatballs and place in an oven-proof casserole dish. Pour over the chopped tomato sauce and bake in a pre-heated oven at 180°C for 25–30 minutes.

For other information specific to your baby's age, visit www.meandmychild.com.au

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Important Statement:

Breastfeeding is the normal method of infant feeding, and is best for babies. It has benefits for the infant, such as reducing infection risk, and for the mother. It is important to have a healthy balanced diet in preparation for, and during breastfeeding. Infant formula is designed to replace breast milk when an infant is not breastfed.

Breastfeeding can be negatively affected by introducing partial bottle-feeding, and reversing a decision not to breastfeed is difficult. Infant formula must be prepared and used as directed. Unnecessary or improper use of infant formula, such as not properly boiling water or sterilising feeding equipment, may make your baby ill. Social and financial implications, including preparation time and the cost of formula, should be considered when selecting a method of infant feeding.



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The information in this brochure has been prepared with the guidance and assistance of a healthcare professional. It is provided for general information only and is not a substitute for professional advice. Please consult your doctor if you are concerned about your baby's health.

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