



MEALTIME MEMO

October
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INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS TO INFANTS

Infants' nutritional needs evolve during their first year, and introducing solid foods is crucial in their development. This *Mealtime Memo* provides information to help introduce solid foods smoothly. It covers recommendations for when and how to start, suggests suitable foods, highlights foods to avoid, and provides tips to reduce the risk of choking.



When to Introduce Solid Foods to Infants

Around six months, an infant's reserves of iron and zinc start to decrease. Introducing nutrient-dense solid foods to infants when they show signs of being developmentally ready to ensure they receive these essential nutrients is recommended. Developmental readiness is when an infant:

- Sits up alone or with support
- Has good head and neck control
- Shows interest in foods (e.g., watches others eat, reaches for food, opens mouth for food)
- Closes their lips over a spoon and swallows food instead of pushing it out

While these guidelines are helpful, each infant's readiness for solid foods varies based on development and their pediatrician's guidance.

How to Introduce Solid Foods to Infants

- Talk with parents or caregivers about which new foods their infant is trying at home and which foods they would like you to offer.
- Start with foods that contain only one ingredient and introduce small amounts to see if the infant will accept them. Allow 3–5 days between the introductions of each new food.
- Watch infants closely after each meal to ensure no allergic reactions.
- Offer age-appropriate textures. Start with thin purees. Then slowly transition to mashed, ground, diced, and finely chopped foods.



Foods to Introduce

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* state that there is no specific order in which foods must be introduced. Offer a variety of developmentally appropriate, nutrient-dense foods rich in iron and zinc, including iron-fortified infant cereals, meats and meat alternates (e.g., shredded chicken, scrambled eggs, yogurt), fruits (e.g., applesauce, small pieces of banana), vegetables (e.g., soft peas, mashed potatoes), and grains (e.g., well-cooked pasta, soft bread strips).

Common Food Allergens

It is recommended to introduce potentially allergenic foods (e.g., peanuts, eggs, tree nuts, sesame, wheat, crustacean shellfish, fish, and soy) when other foods are introduced. Delaying the introduction of these foods does not prevent food allergies.

- Watch the AAP's [videos](#) on introducing foods to infants: "Baby's First Foods" and "Baby's First Foods: What About Allergies?" for more information.



What About Peanut-Containing Foods?

Guidelines recommend introducing infant-safe, peanut-containing foods, such as thinned peanut butter, when infants are ready for solid foods, typically between 4 and 6 months, to help prevent peanut allergies. Early introduction can reduce the risk of developing a peanut allergy by up to 81%. Be sure to share this crucial information with parents.

Helpful Tips!

Check out the [Feeding Your Baby Solid Foods](#) resource from Food Allergy Prevention.org for tips on introducing solid foods and adding safe peanut foods.

Foods to Avoid

It is recommended to avoid serving the following foods and beverages to infants:

- Foods with added salt or sugars or that contain artificial sweeteners
- Regular cow's milk, soy beverages, juice, or honey before 12 months (honey can cause botulism in infants)
- Choking risks, such as hot dogs, large pieces of meat, raw vegetables, whole grapes, popcorn, peanuts or nuts, or chunks of peanut or nut butter





Tips to Reduce the Risk of Choking

Here are some ways to help prevent choking in infants:

- Cook or steam hard fruits and vegetables, such as apples and carrots, to be easily mashed or pureed.
- Before cooking, remove all fat, skin, and bones from chicken, meat, and fish.
- Remove seeds, pits, skins and peels from fruit, and then cut into small pieces.
- Cut cylindrical foods like hot dogs, sausage, and string cheese into short, thin strips no larger than ½ inch instead of round pieces that could get stuck in the airway.
- Cut small, round foods like grapes, cherries, melon balls, and tomatoes into small pieces no larger than ½ inch.

References

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