

## Introducing Solid Foods:

When your baby reaches about 6 months of age, it's time to start on solid food. Your child may show signs that he or she is ready to start solids at four or five months, but it is best to wait until 6 months of age to ensure digestion is matured enough to handle solid foods. What are some signs that your child is ready for solids?

- Baby shows interest in your plate, tries to grab your food or has a new interest in what's happening at the table
- Baby mimics your eating or mouth motions
- When he or she can sit up on their own
- When the tongue's sucking reflex has relaxed. When this happens food will be able to pass into the throat more easily
- Your baby seems less interested in breastfeeding or formula

Fruits and vegetables are the first foods your baby will eat, and ideally, will continue to eat as he/she gets older. So the question of what's best in this department arises. Whenever possible, choose local, seasonal and organic produce. Organic foods are naturally grown without the use of synthetically manufactured chemical fertilizers or genetically modified organisms. Choosing organic, as much as your budget allows, is especially important for babies because of the immaturity of their immune system and digestive system.

## Suggested First Foods:

- Vegetables, such as asparagus, beets, broccoli, butternut squash, carrots, cauliflower, green beans, green peas, parsnips, sweet potatoes, turnips, zucchini.
- Fruits, such as apples, apricots, avocado, banana, blueberries, cherries, mango, nectarines, papaya, pears, plums, dried prunes

## How to Prepare Foods at Home:

- Peel, core and chop the fruit or vegetable into small cubes (for convenience sake, you can look for pre-cubed vegetables in the produce section – such as butternut squash, sweet potatoes, carrots, etc).
- Place cubes in your steamer basket over boiling water and turn heat to medium. Steam with the lid on until tender – the fruit/vegetable should be able to be easily mashed without resistance.
- Place cooked food into a bowl and puree with a hand blender or place in a stand blender or food processor. Add filtered water, as is necessary. You are looking for the consistency of a smooth, thick soup to begin with, gradually leaving more texture as your baby gets used to eating more solid foods.
- Ripe banana, avocado and papaya can be mashed with a fork or the back of a spoon and served. These are great on-the-go options.

**NOTE** – make sure that you introduce foods one at a time so that if any reaction occurs, it is easy to pinpoint exactly which food is causing the issue.

At the 8-9 month mark, if you haven't already, you can add some more textured foods to your purees. A sample of an average day is:

- 3-4 feedings (breast milk OR fortified formula)
- Cereals or well-cooked porridges (storebought or home made) – about 2 servings per day (2-4 tbsp/day)
- Purees – 1/4 cup each day
- Textured Dishes – 1/4 cup each day
- Dairy Products (optional) – full fat yogurt, cottage cheese, or shredded cheese are good options
- Finger Foods – for fun



These are just guidelines, so don't worry too much. As long as your child is continuing to gain weight and seems to have a healthy appetite, all is well.

You can begin to introduce the following:

- Beans and legumes (watch for “skins” on chickpeas, etc,)
- Fresh and dried herbs and spices
- Nut butters except peanut butter
- Dairy products – yogurt, cottage cheese, shredded cheese
- Soft sautéed vegetables, rather than just purees
- Finger foods – small pieces of soft fruit or steamed veggies, cut up dried fruit, beans, brown rice cakes, puffed rice cereal, brown rice pasta noodles

