

## TABLE FOODS

Once your baby shows a general tolerance for strained foods, feel free to experiment with some “real” food from your own plate. Mash or tear food into bite-sized pieces, and go slowly.

By about one year of age, your child will probably be eating most of the same meals that you eat. This assumes that your own diet is well-balanced.

## GAGGING

Biting, chewing and swallowing in a coordinated way are learned skills. All babies will gag occasionally on their food while learning these skills. Don't panic. Give your baby at least 30 seconds to clear the food away.

Turning red or purple is very common when a baby gags. Remember to stay away from foods that are easy to choke on. Now is the best time to start the rule that “playtime is playtime and eat time is eat time.”

**Eating should be a sitting activity.** Most serious choking accidents occur when toddlers fall down while running with food in their mouth. This is an accident that is easily prevented!

## IRON-RICH FOODS

Throughout our lives we need iron in our diet to prevent anemia. Certain foods are especially good sources of iron.

- Red meats, fish and poultry are best.
- You can also find iron in iron-fortified cereals, beans, eggs, peanut butter, raisins, prune juice, sweet potatoes and spinach.

## VITAMINS

Added vitamins are usually not necessary after your child is a year old and eating a balanced diet. The exception may be vitamin D. Talk to your pediatrician about whether your child needs to continue or start a vitamin D supplement.



[www.childrens-clinic.com](http://www.childrens-clinic.com)

## PETERKORT OFFICE

Peterkort Centre 1  
9555 SW Barnes Road, Suite 301  
Portland, Oregon 97225  
(503) 297-3371 • Fax: (503) 297-7975

## TUALATIN OFFICE

Meridian Park Medical Plaza 2  
19260 SW 65th Avenue, Suite 340  
Tualatin, Oregon 97062  
(503) 691-9777 • Fax: (503) 692-6736

## FEEDING SOLID FOODS

### AGE FOR STARTING SOLID FOODS

Breast milk or iron-fortified formula remains your baby's most important source of nutrition and all he really needs until 6 months of age. How do you know when your baby is ready to try solids? You may introduce solids between 4-6 months if your baby has good head and neck control. If he pushes all the food out with his tongue – he's not ready. That's due to a reflex that will disappear as he or she gets older. The solids should be given in addition to, not instead of, breast milk or formula. Breast milk or formula will be an important part of your baby's nutrition until a year of age. Note that research has shown that in most cases introducing solid foods will not help your baby sleep through the night.

### WHAT FOOD DO I GIVE?

**The order in which you introduce different foods is not important.** There is no medical evidence that starting foods in any particular order has any medical benefit. For example, starting veggies before fruits will not make your child less likely to have a sweet-tooth!

Start with single-ingredient foods.

- Pureed meats and iron-fortified cereals are good sources of nutrients.
- Pureed meat is a great source of iron and zinc that is easily absorbed.
- Meats and vegetables tend to have more nutrients than fruits and cereals.

Introduce only one new food every 3-5 days so that if your baby has a reaction, you can identify which food caused it.

- Watch for diarrhea, rash or vomiting, and let your doctor know if your child has any of those symptoms.
- Do not offer mixed foods until you have tried each of the ingredients separately.
- Babies often act as though they do not like new foods and may spit them out. This is their reaction to new textures and/or tastes. Don't give up. Try the same food again in a few days.

Don't force your baby to eat. Allow your baby to stop eating as soon as she seems to lose interest. She can tell you she's full by leaning back or turning away.

#### **WHAT FOODS DO I NEED TO AVOID?**

- Avoid honey and cow's milk until your child is a year old.
- Stay away from foods that are high in calories, fat and sugar such as sweetened drinks, soda and french fries.
- Do not add extra sugar or salt to your baby's foods. Remember, as soon as your baby starts to seem unwilling to eat, let him stop. This sets him up for good habits of eating food in moderation.
- Avoid foods your child might choke on such as nuts, popcorn, whole grapes, hot dogs, hard candy, gum and raisins. These should wait until your child is at least 3 years old. To decrease chances of her choking, supervise mealtime, and feed her only when she is sitting.

There used to be a whole list of foods that we told you to avoid until your baby is older – eggs, fish, peanut products, strawberries, and so on. That isn't true anymore. Why? This recommendation was based on concerns about food allergies. However, the most recent research has shown that avoiding these foods until your child is older does not prevent food allergy. There is even some evidence that introducing these foods a little earlier (but after 4-6 months old) may help prevent allergy.

Caution about peanut butter in large amounts – It can stick to the roof of the mouth and be a choking hazard.

#### **CREATING HEALTHY EATING HABITS**

Remember that mealtime is a social event. Include your baby at family meals and develop the habit of eating as a family at the table. As your child gets older, establish regular mealtimes and snack times with 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day. Most babies begin this pattern between 6 and 9 months of age.

- Avoid continuous feeding or "grazing" to help prevent both obesity and underweight.
- Some examples of healthy snacks are fresh fruit cut into small pieces, cheese, dry cereals or small pieces of whole-grain bread or crackers.
- If you give juice as part of a meal or snack, limit it to no more than 4 oz per day.

Remember that you are responsible for providing a variety of healthy foods for your baby, but she is responsible for deciding how much to eat. Don't encourage her to eat more than she wants.

Continue to offer your child a variety of foods from the basic food groups, and he will get the nutrition he needs.

- Even when she refuses certain foods, continue to offer them in small portions.
- It often takes 8-10 exposures to a new food before a child will eat it.
- Touching, smelling and playing with new foods as well as putting them in the mouth and spitting them back out are part of her normal exploration.
- Don't get discouraged, and don't force food into your baby's mouth.

#### **SPOON FEEDING**

When you start feedings at 4-6 months of age, begin feeding your baby with a spoon.

- Place the food on the middle of the tongue or put it between your baby's lips and let her suck the food off the spoon.
- Some children constantly bat at the spoon or try to hold it while you are trying to feed them.
- Try distracting your child with finger foods or another spoon to hold.
- By the time they are 9-10 months old, most children want to try feeding themselves and can do that with finger foods.
- By 15 to 18 months old, most children can feed themselves with a spoon and no longer need a parent's help to eat.

#### **FINGER FOODS**

Finger foods are small, bite-sized pieces of soft foods. They can be introduced between 9 and 10 months of age or whenever your child develops a pincer grasp (can pick things up between her thumb and forefinger). Using finger foods gives your baby the chance to feed himself. Most babies love that.

Good finger foods are:

- Dry cereals such as Cheerios
- Cottage cheese
- Slices of cheese
- Pieces of scrambled egg
- Slices of canned fruit or soft fresh fruit
- Crackers or breads
- Soft cooked vegetables
- Cooked pasta or macaroni
- Pieces of ground beef or turkey

Start giving her the same foods your family eats, being careful to maintain a well-balanced diet with foods that are not highly sugared, salted or deep fried.