

**STARTING SOLIDS**

At **4 to 6 months**, most pediatricians recommend introducing solid baby foods. There are many ways to do this, but I have found the following schedule to be most helpful. **Remember, breast milk and formula are still your baby's primary source of nutrition**. So be patient and do not get too concerned if it takes your baby a few weeks to learn to take the cereal. I like to advice parents to start with vegetables rather than fruits because of the tendency for babies to refuse vegetables after getting use to the sweet taste of fruits.

**Step 1 Foods:** These include **single ingredient** foods, like rice cereal, and **pureed** fruits and vegetables**:**

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| **Rice Cereal** | Cereal is the most important solid food. It contains many vitamins and minerals, including iron. You should begin by mixing a small amount with some breast milk, formula or water to a soup consistency. Offer this once a day **from a spoon**. As your baby develops the ability to swallow solids, you may slowly thicken the mixture until you reach an oatmeal consistence. By 6 months of age, you should be giving approximately 1/2 cup of cereal per day. |
| **Orange Vegetables**  | After your baby has mastered cereal, you may begin to introduce vegetables. Begin with orange vegetables, introducing one new one every 3 to 4 days to make sure there are no allergies. Begin with the small jars or Step 1 foods. If you choose to make your own, imitate the consistency of the Step 1 foods. |
| **Green Vegetables** | Once you have finished the orange vegetables, you may follow the same procedure with the green vegetables. |
| **Fruits**  | After the vegetables, begin to introduce the fruits. You may mix these with your cereal if you prefer. |

**Serving Size:**

In general, most babies are having two meals per day by six months of age. Your baby will help you decide the serving size. **Do not force feed your baby**. I like to recommend that you offer foods **after** formula or breast milk. Make sure your infant receives no less than 24 ounces of formula or breast milk a day. Otherwise, they may have as much solid food as they like.

**Juice:**
I do **not** routinely recommend juice. It has very little nutritional value and a lot of sugar. However, cereal sometimes causes constipation. In this case, you may give your baby 1 to 4 ounces a day of 100% Apple or Prune juice or mix the jar of Step 1 prunes with your baby's cereal.

**Step 2 foods:**

Step 2 foods are combination foods that are **strained**, instead or being pureed
No earlier than 6 months of age and once you have tried all Step 1 foods, you may progress to Step 2 foods and other cereals. Again, if you are introducing something new, wait a few days before you try another new food to make sure there are no allergies.

**Step 3 Foods:**

When your baby is 9-12 months old, he should be ready for '3' baby foods. These foods have more texture and small **chunks** to encourage chewing.

**Step 4 Foods:**

Your baby will progress to '4' foods or **table food** at the end of his first year or beginning of his second year. At this point, you may be feeding your baby the food that the rest of the family is eating, or you might continue to buy commercially prepared toddler foods. Keep in mind that the age recommendations for when you start each stage are just general guidelines. All babies progress through the stages at their own pace. If your infant seems to be stuck on a stage we can discuss it at any visit.

**Safety:**

* Try not to feed from the jar. If your baby doesn't finish a jar of food you may store it in the refrigerator for later use. If you feed straight from a jar the bacteria from your baby's mouth will remain in the jar and may cause your baby to be sick if you feed the food later.
* **Do not** start baby biscuits, crackers, cheerios or other solid foods until your baby can crawl and do a "pincher" grasp. A "pincher" grasp is when a baby can pick up a small item using just his thumb and first finger.
* Always feed your baby upright in a high chair or bouncy seat. Make sure they are strapped in to the seat.
* If you warm foods, make sure they are not too hot by testing on your wrist.
* Do not leave your infant unattended while eating.
* If you feel like your infant may be choking, **do not** use your finger to sweep the food out of the mouth. Place the infant in a bent over position or over your knee and provide firm back blows to dislodge the food particle. Call 911 immediately if your baby turns blue around the lips and/or is not making coughing and sputtering noises.