



## **Introducing Solid Foods to Your Baby: A Guide for Parents**

Congratulations on reaching this exciting milestone in your baby's development! We understand that introducing solid foods is a crucial step in your infant's journey to a well-balanced diet. This handout provides valuable information on introducing solids, including recommendations on early introduction of high allergy foods, and an overview of baby-led weaning.

### **When to Start:**

Around four to six months of age is generally the ideal time to start introducing solid foods. By this age, most babies have developed the necessary skills, such as sitting up and showing interest in what you're eating. However, it's essential to consider your baby's individual development, and consulting with your pediatrician before starting is always a good idea.

### **Getting Started:**

1. Choose the Right Time: Pick a time when your baby is alert, but not overly hungry or tired.
2. Start Simple: Begin with single-ingredient, iron-rich baby cereals or pureed fruits and vegetables. Avoid introducing more than one new food at a time to easily identify any potential allergies or sensitivities.

### **Introduction of High-Allergy Foods:**

Contrary to past recommendations, current research suggests that introducing common allergenic foods early on may reduce the risk of allergies. While every baby is different, consider introducing foods containing peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, dairy, soy, wheat, and fish early in the solid food journey.

1. Peanuts and Tree Nuts: Introduce nut butters by spreading a thin layer on a cracker or mixing a small amount into baby cereal.
2. Eggs: Start with well-cooked, finely mashed eggs or incorporate them into pureed fruits or vegetables.
3. Fish: Offer small, well-cooked portions of fish, paying attention to bones and ensuring the texture is appropriate for your baby's stage.

### **Common Allergy Introduction Tips:**

1. Observe for Reactions: Watch for any signs of allergies, such as hives, facial swelling, or difficulty breathing. If any of these symptoms occur, contact your pediatrician immediately. For severe reactions, call 9-1-1.
2. Gradual Introduction: Introduce one high-allergy food at a time and wait three to five days before introducing another. This helps identify any potential allergies.
3. Ongoing exposure: Continue to give these foods on a regular basis if your child tolerates them without any reactions.

### **Baby-Led Weaning:**

Baby-led weaning is an approach where babies are encouraged to self-feed from the beginning. This method focuses on introducing appropriate finger foods, allowing your baby to explore different tastes and textures at their own pace.

1. Choosing Safe Foods: Opt for soft, easy-to-grasp finger foods like well-cooked vegetables, fruits, and soft meats. Avoid small, hard, or choke-inducing foods, such as whole grapes, popcorn, hot dogs and hard fruits.
2. Supervision is Key: Always supervise your baby during meals to ensure their safety. Baby-led weaning promotes self-feeding, but close monitoring is essential.
3. Mealtime as a Learning Experience: Allow your baby to explore the sensory aspects of food. This approach encourages independence and helps develop fine motor skills.

### **Tips for Success:**

1. Patience is Key: Your baby might not immediately take to solid foods, and that's okay. Be patient and try different foods and textures.
2. Variety Matters: Offer a variety of foods to expose your baby to different tastes and nutrients. This sets the foundation for a well-rounded diet in the future.
3. Mealtime is a social experience: Have your meals alongside your child. They learn their best feeding habits from watching the examples set for them!

### **Tips for Serving:**

1. **Texture Progression:** As your baby grows, gradually introduce more textures to encourage chewing and self-feeding. This helps develop oral motor skills.
2. **Balanced Meals:** Aim for a variety of food groups in each meal to ensure a balanced diet. Include sources of protein, carbohydrates, healthy fats, and a mix of fruits and vegetables.
3. **Allergen Introduction:** Continue introducing common allergenic foods as per the previous recommendations. Monitor for any signs of allergies and consult with your pediatrician if needed.
4. **Responsive Feeding:** Pay attention to your baby's cues and respond accordingly. Allow them to explore different flavors and textures at their own pace.

Here are sample meals with types of food and recommended serving amounts suitable for a 6-12 month old infant:

#### Meal 1: Breakfast

##### *Option 1: Oatmeal with Mashed Berries*

- Serve 2-3 tablespoons of cooked oatmeal mixed with a small amount of breast milk or formula. Top with mashed berries (blueberries, strawberries).

##### *Option 2: Whole Grain Toast with Mashed Avocado*

- Offer a small piece of whole grain toast spread with a thin layer of mashed avocado. Cut into bite-sized pieces.

#### Meal 2: Lunch

##### *Option 1: Sweet Potato and Lentil Puree*

- Combine 2-3 tablespoons of mashed sweet potato with cooked and pureed lentils. Ensure a smooth consistency.

##### *Option 2: Quinoa Salad with Finely Chopped Vegetables*

- Mix cooked quinoa with finely chopped cooked vegetables (carrots, peas). Ensure that the quinoa is soft and the vegetables are cut into small, manageable pieces.

#### Meal 3: Snack

##### *Option 1: Greek Yogurt with Banana Slices*

- Serve 2-3 tablespoons of plain, full-fat Greek yogurt with banana slices. Yogurt provides calcium and healthy fats.

##### *Option 2: Rice Cakes with Hummus*

- Offer small pieces of rice cakes with a thin layer of hummus. Hummus adds protein and flavor.

#### Meal 4: Dinner

##### *Option 1: Mashed Butternut Squash and Peas*

- Steam and mash butternut squash, and mix with cooked peas. Provide 2-3 tablespoons of the mashed mixture.

##### *Option 2: Soft Shredded Chicken and Brown Rice*

- Cook and shred boneless, skinless chicken into small, manageable pieces. Serve with cooked brown rice.

#### Meal 5: Dessert (Optional)

##### *Option 1: Mango and Banana Smoothie*

- Blend ripe mango and banana with a small amount of plain yogurt or breast milk. Serve in a small cup.

##### *Option 2: Unsweetened Applesauce with Cinnamon*

- Offer 2-3 tablespoons of unsweetened applesauce sprinkled with a pinch of cinnamon.

These sample meals are **general guidelines**, and it's important to be flexible based on your baby's preferences and developmental stage. Always consult with your pediatrician for personalized advice, especially if you have concerns about allergies or specific dietary needs. Enjoy the journey of discovering new foods together with your growing infant!