

A 4 month Baby's Diet

STARTING BABY FOODS

By four or five months of age babies are interested in sitting up and taking part in family activities. Their digestion has matured so that careful food additions are unlikely to cause colic or allergy. Most babies should start solid foods, in addition to their breast milk or formula, at around this age,

How to do it. By four or five months of age most babies have a regular feeding schedule. Offer each new food at a regular feeding time, before breast or bottle, when the baby is neither too hungry or tired. Usually it is best at first to hold your baby on your lap, or the infant seat can be used. A high chair will be helpful when your baby has good head and back control. Use a small baby spoon, and put a very small amount of food on your baby's tongue. Give her time to get used to the taste and to learn to swallow new foods. Smile and have a good time at meals.

Foods to use. Start one food at a time, and wait 4 or 5 days between food additions. If your baby has trouble with any new food, stop it and wait two months or more before trying that food again. Often it is best to start with rice or oats cereal, mixed with breast milk, water or formula. Next try a yellow vegetable such as squash, carrots or sweet potato. Then try a fruit - applesauce, pears or bananas.

By six to eight months of age meats, beginning with chicken and turkey, can be started, and green vegetables can be added to the diet. These foods may be more palatable if mixed with cereal or a yellow vegetable. After six months of age you may start peaches, plums, prunes and apricots, other meats, and baked potato. Again, two new foods per week are enough.

Schedules. Start feeding your baby solid foods twice a day. Soon you will find that she is hungry enough to demand three meals and she may even want a little cereal, in addition, at bedtime. Babies' meals are often more pleasant and less hurried when they are fed when the family is eating. However, if the family dinner is late, you may have a happier baby in the afternoon and an easier bedtime if she has her dinner at 4:30 or 5:00. Discuss meal times and content with your day care worker or babysitter.

Commercial foods. If you use store-bought baby foods, read the labels carefully. Buy single foods rather than mixtures or "dinners" which will give your baby several different new foods all at once. Don't buy puddings or desserts, because your baby doesn't need the extra sugar. Buy foods labeled "no salt added" and "no sugar added." Take a small amount of food from the jar to put in your baby's dish. Cap the rest and return it to the refrigerator. Don't feed directly from the baby food jar unless you intend to finish it. Some foods may be best served warmer than room temperature. A warming dish is nice. Be very cautious about using a microwave because of the danger of mouth burns from excessive and uneven heating.

Making your own. When you make homemade baby foods, a small blender or a food mill will be helpful. Avoid fried or spicy foods, and don't add salt, sugar or baking soda to the part of the food you are preparing for your baby. Stick to the foods listed above. When you have made a batch of baby food, refrigerate it in meal-sized amounts in baby food jars, or freeze it in ice cube or popsicle trays or plastic bags until you are ready to use it. Except for ripe bananas, feed only cooked foods until your baby is 10 or 12 months old.

Juice. Some babies after 4 months of age enjoy a little apple juice, but juice is by no means necessary. It should be diluted with water at least until 6 months of age. Many babies do not tolerate orange or tomato juice before 10 to 12 months of age. Two ounces of juice per day is the maximum amount we recommend for babies under 8 months of age. Koolaid, soda pop and other sweet drinks too often cause rashes, reduce appetite for healthy foods and are not appropriate for healthy babies.

Other foods. Wheat products and red meat and egg yolks may be started at about 8 months of age. Wait to start custards and egg whites and chocolate until about 12 months of age, and also postpone peanut butter and tuna fish until after the second birthday. (third birthday for peanut butter if there is a family history of peanut allergy) Ice cream and cottage cheese, when your baby is not allergic to dairy products, are best started after 9 months of age. Pickles, catsup, other tomato base foods, fried and spicy foods and most other fish should wait until after 18 months of age.

Basic rules.

1. Use single-ingredient foods at first.
2. Wait 4 or 5 days between food additions.
3. Put opened jars of food in the refrigerator immediately, and don't feed baby directly from the jar.
4. Feed your baby when she is hungry, but don't overfeed her.
5. Bottles should not be taken lying flat or in bed.
6. Respect your baby's preferences so long as she is getting a balanced diet.
7. Make meal time a happy, relaxed time.