

# The Essentials of Feeding the Baby

**When your baby** reaches the age of six months he or she will be ready for solid foods.

- Younger infants do not properly digest complex starches or other foods.
- Most babies do not have the coordination of the lips and the tongue to handle solids efficiently before four to six months.
- There are concerns that early indications of solid foods to infants less than 6 months of age may predispose certain infants to food allergies.
- Most important of all they don't need any additional food. There is nothing magical about our 32-ounce quart. The number has no relationship to the food needs of individual infants.

**When your baby eats solid:**

- The stools will change in color. They may become either too hard or too loose.
- Expect the unexpected! Rashes, Diarrhea, spitting up, cramps etc. May occur.
- The most recently introduced food or foods should be suspected.
- Poor nighttime sleeping will NOT be improved by the addition of solid foods. Babies don't wake because they are hungry. There are no hunger pains during sleep.
- Go slowly with the addition of new food items and to introduce one thing at a time.
- Add only one new item every three or four days. That will give you a fair chance of knowing what may have caused a reaction.
- Do not give commercial or home made mixtures, which contain more than one food, which is new to the baby

**What to feed** and when to feed is partly scientific, partly tradition and partly common sense.

**Six months Old:**

- Start with any cereal or any fruit.
- Add one new cereal or fruit every three or four days.
- Start with small amounts.

- Infants, like their parents, may not like every kind of food.
- Feed the baby once or twice a day depending on his or her appetite and don't be concerned if a meal is refused now and then.
- If the first bottle or nursing of the day is 6 AM it's probably best to offer solids at the next feeding when you are really awake.

**Seven Months Old:**

- Vegetables are introduced as a lunch meal.
- If baby dislikes a particular food, put it aside for a later time.
- Use a few tricks now and then but don't force feed.
- Use fruit on the spoon with the vegetables.
- Use mashed table vegetables, which taste a lot better.

**Eight months Old:**

- Introduce meats at the lunch meal along with the vegetables.
- Catch up on all things you may have skipped in the last two months.
- Try those foods, which may have caused some mild upset such as loose stools, spitting up or belly aches when first introduced. These reactions rarely recur after an interval of one to two months.

**Nine Months Old:**

- This is the earliest any infant should be exposed to cow's milk.
- Those with any allergic disorder with a history of allergy in the immediate family should avoid cow's milk and cow's milk products such as cheese and yogurt till at least a year of age.
- Low fat milk should NOT be used until two years of age.
- Cow's milk may constipate some babies and this may happen whether the whole milk is introduced or gradually or all at once.
- Hot or cold milk is a matter of taste and personal preference and not a matter of health to infants.

### **Nine Months Old (continued):**

- Milk drinking will decline spontaneously and this may begin anywhere from nine months of age to somewhat over a year of age.
- Also introduce non-mold cheeses and yogurt. This is particularly useful if the milk drinking has declined too quickly.
- Introduce fish into the diet either as carefully boned fresh fish or canned fish. Hold off shellfish till after one year of age.

### **Twelve Months old**

- Most one-year-old infants will spontaneously begin to lose interest in nursing. The vast majority of infants will abandon nursing at the breast or the bottle at twelve to sixteen months of age.
- Never put the infant into bed with the bottle nor allow him or her to fall asleep in your arms while nursing or while on the bottle. Falling asleep on the bottle or at the breast as a newborn is inevitable and natural but it should be discouraged at an early age. The frequent consequences are difficult weaning, sleeping problems and dental decay

### **Use home made foods**

- This may be done as early as 6 months of age with cereal and fruit
- Start table foods no later than 9 months of age
- Introduce new textures and tastes. Most infants take to this right away
- Infants want what they see other people eating
- The taste of table food is always an improvement over most commercial baby foods
- Start with soft, well-cooked vegetables and fruits that can be easily mashed
- Anything you can easily mash, an infant can easily chew with no teeth
- The more he or she likes these new coarser foods the more you switch over. There is no hurry. Go at your child's pace.

### **Some foods cause more allergies than others.**

- Avoid feeding chocolate, uncooked tomato, eggs, and strawberry, pork, shellfish, nuts and peanut products until a year of age. Use citrus with caution.

**Some other foods** and food substances create unhealthy lifetime habits or dependencies.

- Avoid salty foods and do not cook with salt. Salt affects Blood Pressure Avoid sweetened foods whether natural or artificial.
- Avoid high fat and high cholesterol containing foods.

**Still other foods** can be dangerous.

- Foods can get lodged in the throat or be aspirated into the windpipe or lung.
- Beware of peanuts and hard candy, raw hard vegetables and smooth rubbery things such as grapes, hot dogs and popcorn.
- Avoid Zwieback. Choose other types of crackers.
- Some children stuff their faces without swallowing, some bite off more than they can chew. Always supervise infants and toddlers when they have access to food, even supposedly safe foods.

**Quality counts** and so does costs.

Commercial baby foods provide convenience. It is **not** healthier and it is not better tasting.

- There is an amazing amount of water in baby food.
- Try using a little machine called a baby food mill. It will pay for itself.
- The food will taste better and the transition to table food will be easier.
- The infant should be totally on table foods, chopped or mashed, by sixteen months of age.
- Fruit juices should be given in moderation because of their large sugar content. "Grown up" juices are just fine if dilute in half with water.
- Inexpensive fruit drinks sold as 10% real fruit juice are 90% cane sugar or corn syrup and should be discouraged. Better to use a little of the costlier good stuff than a lot of the cheaper sugar drinks.
- Artificial sweeteners may not be safe for children on a daily basis.
- Don't let food become a sleeping pill. Rotting teeth and interrupted sleep will inevitably become a problem.