

RAISING ADVENTUROUS EATERS with first foods

4-6
Months
Guide

From four to six months, breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula is still the main food in your baby's diet. Experts recommend starting solid foods at 6 months, but if your baby is showing signs of readiness for "tasting flavors," you can start offering small tastes of pureed foods shortly before 6 months. If your baby does not show these signs, do not start. Wait until your baby is ready.



What are the signs of readiness?

Your baby is ready for small tastes of pureed or smooth foods when they can hold their head up steadily, open their mouth when they see food, sit upright with support in an infant seat or high chair, keep food in their mouth and swallow it, and bring toys or their fist to their mouth to explore.



What is the "flavor window"?

The flavors your baby is exposed to early on can shape their taste preferences for life. As they approach 6 months, babies are highly receptive to a variety of flavors. If you choose to offer some tiny tastes before 6 months, focus on a variety of single ingredient foods, to not hide the flavor with other tastes. Consider prioritizing tastes of veggies, which are often more bitter or savory, to expand your baby's taste palate.



What kind of foods should I offer my baby as they approach 6 months?

Your baby's diet is still mainly breast milk or formula. To begin experiencing flavors of foods, offer your baby a small taste of smooth pureed veggies (such as broccoli, sweet potatoes, beets) and smooth pureed fruits (such as peaches, apples, berries).

Previous recommendations on waiting 3-5 days in between introducing new foods is no longer necessary when offering low allergenic foods such as veggies or fruits. If your baby or family has a history of allergies, talk to your baby's doctor before beginning.. See the 6-9 Months Guide and "Safe Eating Tips" section for answers to common questions about safely starting solids for your baby at 6 months.



How much should my baby be tasting?

When offering foods, think variety not volume. **As your baby approaches 6 months**, food is more for taste exposure, not for calories or nutrients, which your baby is getting from breast milk and/or formula. Offer just one to two teaspoons of a one-ingredient food, to not hide the flavor. Prioritize a variety of veggies. You can offer smooth pureed food on a soft baby spoon or from your clean fingertip.

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breast milk:

all milk expressed through breastfeeding or pumping

Why does my baby make a face when tasting food?

Sometimes babies make faces when they try certain foods. These expressions do not mean they don't like these foods. It is often just a reaction to a new and different texture. Offer another taste of the food, and if your baby opens their mouth, you know they want more! Often fruits are easy for babies to enjoy because of their sweetness. Bitter or savory foods like some veggies may take more practice before your baby appears to like them. Make sure to offer those more often.

When do I offer allergenic foods?

Wait until your baby is 6 months old to introduce the top 9 foods that often cause allergies (dairy, egg, peanut, tree nut, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, sesame). Research shows that this early exposure, and continued regular exposure, helps to reduce the risk of developing severe food allergies. Talk to your pediatrician and see the 6-9 Months Guide and "Safe Eating Tips" section for answers to common questions about safely starting solids, including allergenic foods, for your baby at 6 months.



Boosting Feeding Development

- 1. ORAL MOTOR SKILLS:** When babies nibble on their fingers, hands, and teethers, they are learning to fine tune their jaw movements and explore with their mouths. You can help babies enjoy this time of exploration by offering a variety of safe teethers in many different shapes and textures.
- 2. GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:** Encourage your baby to roll with supervised "tummy time." First they will roll from belly to back and then eventually from back to belly. This time will help them build their core muscles so they can sit up and eat solid foods as they approach 6 months.
- 3. FINE MOTOR SKILLS:** Encourage your baby to grab onto teethers or other safe toys. This skill will be important as they learn to hold a spoon once they have started eating solids around 6 months.
- 4. COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Talk to your baby face to face, pausing occasionally to watch and respond to their attempts to communicate back to you. You are getting these skills ready for sharing conversation during meals together, so keep distractions like screen time to a minimum and enjoy the connections you make with your baby.
- 5. TASTE TRAINING:** If you try tastes of different flavors close to 6 months, notice what they immediately accept and reject. Make sure to offer foods like veggies with more bitter or sour tastes more frequently than fruits, once you start feeding solids regularly at 6 months.

REMEMBER to share this information with anyone in your household or support system who will also be responsible for feeding your child.



The information contained in this guide should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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