



## getting started feeding and making baby food

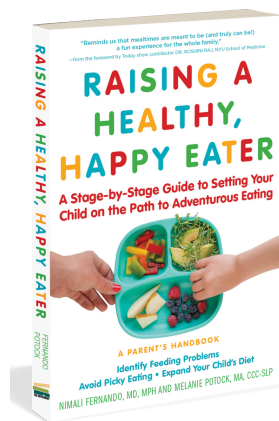
by Nimali Fernando, MD, MPH, founder of Dr. Yum Project



Introducing a baby to solid foods can be a very exciting time for parents. Seeing how a baby experiences and reacts to different foods is yet another way to get to know your baby.

When your pediatrician says you are ready to start solid foods, usually around 6 months, you may have a lot of questions about how much food to give, what kinds of food to give, and in what order food should be introduced. These are just a few of the most common types of questions about starting solid foods.

The answers to these questions are important, but the more we understand the developmental process of feeding and how to foster it, the better chance we have of raising great eaters. I recommend two resources on starting solid foods for a good introduction and overview. One is my book, "Raising a Healthy Happy Eater" which is co-authored by my friend Melanie Potock, noted pediatric feeding therapist. Together we stress that feeding is an important facet of a baby's overall development, just like learning to walk or speak. Our book is available at many libraries and bookstores. The other resource is my free baby food webinar, "Dr. Yum's First Foods: A Baby Food Adventure" available on [doctoryum.org](http://doctoryum.org).



Use this book by reading a chapter ahead of your child's stage of development, so you are prepared for the next step!

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In the past rice cereal was commonly recommended as a first solid food. However, rice cereal is very bland and can set the stage for bland food preferences. If you do choose infant cereal as one of your baby's first starting foods, I recommend choosing a whole grain cereal like oatmeal, mixed grain or brown rice cereal, thinned with breastmilk, water or formula. A smooth puree of a fresh or frozen fruit or vegetable is another good starting place.

An infant new to solids may have a tendency to thrust food out of the mouth with the tongue when first introduced. Practice a few times a day. Keep in mind at this early stage, food is not offered as much to "fill" babies, but as an opportunity to taste and practice swallowing solids. In these early months a few bites after formula or breastmilk feeding is a great practice session.

As you are starting purees and advancing texture babies may gag a little bit as they are learning to swallow. This is different from choking. Learn about this difference in "Raising a Healthy, Happy Eater" and how occasional gagging is part of the learning process like stumbling and falling when a child is learning to walk. View my free baby food webinar on [doctoryum.org](http://doctoryum.org) on positioning babies optimally in a feeding chair so the back and feet are supported.

You can start with Stage 1 store bought baby foods, which have only one ingredient and are pureed to a very smooth consistency. Another great option is to make homemade baby foods. Homemade baby foods can be prepared without much time or expense and can introduce babies to a different flavor profile than store bought baby foods offer. You can also have lot of control over the flavor, like adding spices and combining flavors, and you can advance the texture at your own pace as your baby is more comfortable. You don't have to wait for a certain amount of time in between new foods. This may slow down the pace at which you can introduce foods and does not prevent food allergies or help identify them. Instead, rotate through a variety of foods. When you find foods your baby does not prefer, keep practicing until they get used to the taste. Practice makes foods yummiier!

Keep iron-rich foods in mind, especially for breastfed babies. Also, research shows that early introduction of high allergen foods like peanut and eggs may help prevent food allergies, particularly in babies more at risk for food allergies. Talk to your pediatrician if you have concerns about allergies, if your baby has eczema, or there is a family history of food allergies. We love the idea of "One Family, One Meal" and showing your baby how to eat the same nutritious food as you do. For a list family recipe that can be adapted for your baby, check out:

<https://recipes.doctoryum.org/en/tags/babyfood-option>

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## feeding and making baby food

### Starting Solid Foods–Basics

- When to start: around 5-6 months for most babies.
- How much food: offer a few small bites 2-3 times a day AFTER formula or breastmilk.
- What foods should be offered: ANY foods except honey before 12 months.
- When starting foods, keep variety HIGH and volume LOW!
- Iron rich foods: See the table for examples.
- Food allergies: Talk to your pediatrician about starting these early and exposing often. See our table for 8 top food allergens.
- Increasing Texture: after babies are easily swallowing smooth puree.
- Choking vs. Gagging: learn the difference on Pg. 57 in Dr. Yum's Book.
- Positioning baby: support back and feet for an easier first feeding experience.
- Keep food interesting: use FLAVOR including herbs and spices.
- Get messy: let babies explore foods with their hands, mouth and face while making friends with new foods.
- Respect your baby's hunger cues: when they turn their face and lose interest they are probably done.
- Always supervise closely when feeding new eaters.



### Advancing Solid Foods

- Once your baby can swallow purees easily, move on to texture and modified table food.
- "One Meal One Family" means the whole family (even babies) can share the same meal!
- Use the babyfood tag for family recipes that your baby can eat with you.
- Practice the pincer grasp with finger foods and other activities: See Dr. Yum's book for ideas.
- Minimize Toddler Junk food: Cheese puffs, fruit flavored gummy snacks, yogurt melts, toddler prepackaged meals (may have too much salt or sugar).
- Limit Pouches: We want babies to CHEW their food!
- Cup drinking: See p. 87 in Dr. Yum's book for straw cup tutorial at 8-9 months. Wean bottles completely by 12 months.
- After age one the growth curve slows, so toddlers are much LESS hungry than infants.
- Parents provide food, toddlers decide how much to eat. No need for second or third options. Often toddlers get by with only one or two good meals!
- See our STORE on doctoryum.org for ideas on Dr. Yum's favorite baby feeding products.

If you have any concerns about your baby's feeding or ability to tolerate certain foods, please talk with your pediatrician.

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### iron rich foods

beef	beans
veal	chickpeas
chicken	lentils
fish	peanuts
eggs	tree nuts
fortified cereals	spinach
oatmeal	prunes
tofu	potato

### top 9 food allergens



### steamed first foods

broccoli	pears	sweet peas
peaches	apples	zucchini
carrots	cauliflower	summer squash

### fresh first foods

avocado  
banana

### roasted first foods

sweet potatoes	carrots
apples	butternut squash

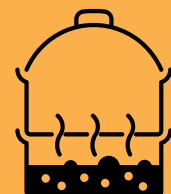
### Items needed to make baby food at home



baking sheet



blender



pot with steamer

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