

Starting Solid Foods: Quick Guide for Parents

Start solids when at approximately 6 months of age, your baby can sit with support, hold their head steady, and shows interest in food. Breast milk or formula remains the main nutrition through the first year.

What to Feed

Start with iron-rich foods: iron-fortified cereal, pureed meats, mashed beans. Then add vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and plain whole-milk yogurt. Cow's milk as a drink should wait until 12 months.

Introduce allergy foods early (around 6 months): peanut butter (thinned), cooked egg, tree nut butters, fish, soy, wheat, dairy. Offer one new food at a time, wait 1–2 days, then try another. Once tolerated, keep offering regularly. If your baby has severe eczema or egg allergy, ask your pediatrician before introducing peanuts.

Texture Progression: **6 months** → smooth purees | **7–8 months** → soft lumps | **9–12 months** → finger foods

Skip the Pouches

Store-bought pouches are high in sugar, low in iron, and don't help your baby learn to chew. Pouches are especially problematic — sucking from a spout limits taste, smell, and texture learning, and is linked to picky eating. Instead, prepare simple foods at home: mashed banana, steamed veggies, scrambled eggs, soft meats. If you use a pouch while traveling, squeeze it onto a spoon.

Avoid

Honey (until 12 months) · added sugar and salt · whole nuts, whole grapes, popcorn, hot dog rounds, raw carrots, hard candy · spoonfuls of nut butter · unpasteurized foods. Home-cooked meals may contain spices, but no added salt. Remove the baby's portion before adding salt to the rest of the family's meal until the baby is 12 months old.

Choking Safety

Always supervise meals in a highchair. Cut round foods lengthwise. Cook hard foods until it is soft. **Gagging** (coughing, sputtering) is normal. **Choking** (silent, can't cry, turning blue) is an emergency — call 911 and do back blows/chest thrusts.

Allergy Warning Signs

Within minutes to 2 hours of a new food, watch for hives, facial swelling, or vomiting → stop the food and call your pediatrician. If your baby has trouble breathing, throat swelling, or goes limp → **call 911 immediately**.

Quick Tips

It can take 10–15 tries before a baby accepts a new food. Let them explore with their hands. Follow their cues — stop when they turn away. Eat together as a family.

Call Your Pediatrician If

Your baby refuses all solids for weeks · blood in stool · persistent vomiting, diarrhea, or poor weight gain · suspected food allergy

Based on AAP, NIAID, and Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025. Visit [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) for more.