

Goodlettsville Pediatrics

Preventing Food Allergies and the Introduction of Solid Foods

We are learning that to prevent food allergies, it is better to introduce allergic foods (eggs, cow milk, fish and nuts) early before the first birthday.

EXCEPTION: IF THE BABY'S FATHER, MOTHER, BROTHER OR SISTER IS ALLERGIC TO NUTS (peanuts, walnuts, pecans cashews, etc.) OR IF YOUR BABY HAS DEVELOPED MODERATELY SEVERE EARLY (under age 6 months) ECZEMA, DISCUSS WITH YOUR PHYSICIAN BEFORE INTRODUCING ALLERGIC FOODS.

0-4 MONTHS Growth is very rapid in the first 4 months with many babies doubling their birth weight. Because of this rapid growth, proper nutrition is EXTREMELY important. The best diet for babies 4 months of age and younger is breast milk or formula exclusively.

4 MONTHS This is a good age to start solids for formula fed babies. Breast fed babies may wait until 6 months of age to start solids. There really is not an exact order that you need to follow in the introduction of solids. We know it is important to start allergic foods before 12 months. We know babies vary in their ability to chew and swallow. The average baby cannot tolerate finger foods or table foods without choking until 8-10 months. Start with pureed baby foods and advance to lumpy and table foods cautiously to avoid choking.

Good starter foods are baby cereals and pureed single fruits and vegetables. Later pureed meats can be added as tolerated. Start with one new food ever 3 to 5 days. Start with small meals twice daily and work up to full meals 3 times daily by 9 months.

6 MONTHS The average 6 month old baby is on two meals of pureed baby foods twice daily but some haven't started solids yet. Pureed baby food meats, or meat dinners (chicken and vegetables, beef noodles, etc.) can be started in addition to cereals, vegetables and fruits. Once your baby is taking pureed baby foods well, you can start to introduce some allergic foods. Start with cow milk added to various foods, like mashed potatoes. Next try eggs in cooked products like pancakes or muffins (if your baby can manage them without choking). Then try cooked eggs themselves, like hard boiled or scrambled eggs.

7 MONTHS Start peanut butter 2 teaspoons thinned with formula, breast milk, water or pureed baby food 3 times weekly. Soft cooked fish can also be started again depending on your baby's ability to handle finger foods. Plan to continue feeding your baby peanut butter regularly several times a week for the next year or longer.

9 MONTHS The average 9 month old is on 3 meals daily mostly of pureed baby foods but also some table and finger foods. Every baby progresses at their own rate. Do introduce allergic foods early but you must follow your own baby's ability to swallow finger and table foods without choking. Some good finger foods for babies include soft cooked carrots and green beans, potatoes, bananas, avocados, tofu, soft cooked fish, cottage cheese, yogurt, and grated soft cheeses like mozzarella. Also some box cereals, like Cheerios and Rice Chex and baby food products like vegetable and fruit puffs. Avoid high fat crackers and cookies with artificial dyes and excess sugar.

COMMENTS:

Baby food juices are not recommended. They may be used for constipation. **THE BEST FLUID FOR YOUR BABY BESIDES FORMULA OR BREAST MILK IS WATER.** Give water in a cup not a bottle and only after 6 months of age.

Baby food desserts are not recommended. Also avoid sugar filled cookies, cakes, etc.

HONEY SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN TO A CHILD UNDER AGE 12 MONTHS (risk of botulism).

Formula or breast milk should be the major source of calories with a minimum of 20-25 oz. of formula or 4 breast feedings daily until 9 months of age. By age 12 months, food becomes the predominate source of calories. **REMEMBER TO CONTINUE FORMULA OR BREAST MILK UNTIL 12 MONTHS OF AGE.**

As you introduce finger and table foods, **AVOID FOODS WITH A HIGH RISK OF CHOKING UNTIL AGE 4 YEARS** (raw carrots, raw apple, meat chunks, hot dogs, hard candies, whole peanuts, raisins, whole grapes and popcorn).

ALLERGIC REACTIONS to food normally occur within minutes of eating the trigger food, though they can sometimes appear a few hours later. Symptoms of a food allergy include:

- Hives or red, itchy skin, red swollen face.
- Sudden runny nose and/or severe coughing within minutes of eating the food.
- Vomiting, stomach cramps or severe diarrhea, especially if blood in the stool.

In some cases, food allergies can cause a severe reaction called **anaphylaxis**. Signs of this reaction include wheezing, chest tightness or trouble breathing.

If you think your baby has had an allergic reaction but there is no problem with wheezing or breathing, then write down all the foods given that day, especially during the hour before the reaction and call the office during regular hours. Avoid these foods until you talk to us about the reaction. **If your baby is having problems with breathing call 911.**

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