



# Ready for solid foods

## A guide to starting solids



Around the middle of their first year of life, babies need iron from the foods they eat — especially when they are breastfeeding. Iron-fortified baby cereal and baby meats help provide this important nutrient that supports your baby's healthy growth and brain development.

### When is your baby ready for solid foods?

- ✓ Has good head control
- ✓ Brings objects to their mouth
- ✓ Sits up without support
- ✓ Seems interested in your food

The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about the first 6 months of age. Do not offer foods before 4 months, but waiting until after 6 months is also not recommended. Most babies are ready around 6 months. Talk with your pediatrician to be sure your child is developmentally ready before starting solid foods.

### Tips for a successful first solid food experience

time of day when your baby is in good spirits, wide awake, and mildly hungry. You can give some breastmilk or formula before solids so they're not uncomfortably hungry.

Make sure your baby is sitting up and secured in a feeding or high chair. Use a soft, rubber-tipped spoon. Start by guiding the spoon to their mouth with your hand and your baby's hand together on the spoon.

Your baby's first tries at swallowing solid foods may be awkward and they may need practice. If food is rejected, offer a few more spoonfuls. Enjoy seeing your baby learn something new: how to eat solid foods.

### Starting Solids Game Plan

#### First days:

When mixing cereal for your baby's first feeding, **mix 1 Tbsp. cereal with 4–5 Tbsp. of breastmilk or infant formula.** This familiar taste helps your baby accept the new taste of cereal.

#### After a few days:

**Introduce 1 new food from any food group** — the order doesn't matter. Check for allergies by waiting about 3 days to watch for any reactions. Increase the amount of food gradually, to allow your baby time to learn how to swallow solids.

#### In the following weeks:

Introducing a **variety of foods is key** to expose your baby to new tastes, flavors, and textures. During this time it is no longer necessary to avoid foods with allergens for most infants. Talk to your pediatrician about how to introduce common food allergens. It may take up to 10 tries for your little one to enjoy a new food. Don't give up, and always introduce new foods with a smile and a happy voice!



Iron-fortified baby cereal supports baby's healthy growth and brain development. **Start with a plain grain baby cereal:**

- Oatmeal Cereal
- Rice Cereal



**Continue cereal and add fruits and vegetables:**

- Apple
- Banana
- Carrot
- Pear
- Strawberry
- Spinach



**You may be offering solid foods 2–3 times each day.**

Mix infant cereal into your baby's favorite purees for a new thicker texture as they progress.

Special instructions: \_\_\_\_\_



# Make every bite count!

## Mealtime is your time together

Mealtime is bonding time and the perfect moment to learn more about your baby's appetite.

You'll find out if they're adventurous or cautious; hungry or full. All this will help you feed them in the way that suits them best. It's called "responsive feeding," and helps to set them up for more healthy eating habits.



### Follow your baby's lead

Pay attention to signs of your baby's hunger and fullness so you know when to start and stop feeding. Research shows that babies know how much they need. And they'll tell you in many ways — smiling, reaching toward the spoon, and eagerly opening their mouths.

### Signs your baby is full

- / Turning their head away
- / Pushing the spoon away
- / Refusing to open mouth
- / Leaning away from spoon
- / Shaking their head "no"
- / Spitting their food out

## Beyond Starter Foods: Establish Healthy Habits for Life

### Readiness cues for the next stages

#### Sitter: 6+ Months

- Sits independently
- Picks up and holds small objects in hands
- Reaches for spoon when hungry
- Uses upper lip to help clear food off spoon

### How to make every bite count — at every stage!



Sitters need nutrient dense, complementary foods that help provide iron to the diet, such as baby cereals and meat. With your doctor's go-ahead, you can offer foods such as peanut and egg in baby-safe forms once your baby is eating a variety of solid foods.

#### Crawler: 8+ Months

- Crawls with stomach off the floor
- May pull self up to stand
- Begins to self feed with fingers
- Begins to use jaw to mash food



Crawlers are learning different textures and picking up foods to self feed. Make every bite count with fortified finger foods designed just for them. Encourage your groups and avoid added sugar. Include foods rich in iron, especially if you are breastfeeding.

#### Toddler: 12+ Months

- Stands alone and begins to walk alone
- Feeds self easily with fingers
- Begins to use spoon and fork
- Bites through a variety of textures



Toddlers need a daily variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups. Eat the rainbow of fruit and veggies — a variety of colors helps provide a variety of nutrients and helps limit sodium from salty snacks. Meats, eggs, whole grains, dairy, and toddler safe forms of nuts and seeds are important for protein, vitamins, and minerals.

Special instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

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