

Starting Complementary Foods

A Review

1. Introduce one *single-ingredient* new food at a time.
 - Introduce one new food at a time. Do not introduce another new food for at least 3 – 5 days to observe for possible allergic reactions.
 - Multigrain cereals and mixed dishes are not recommended as first foods, since identifying a possible allergen is difficult.
2. Choose first foods that provide key nutrients and help meet energy needs.
 - Iron-fortified infant cereal is a good first food because it is easy to digest, and adds iron and zinc to the diet.
3. Introduce a variety of foods by the end of the first year.
 - Once an infant has accepted cereal, strained or pureed vegetables, fruits, and meats may be added to the diet.
 - When introducing a new food, parents may need to offer the food up to 15 times before a child will accept it.
4. Do not give cow's milk (and other milk not formulated for infants) during the first year.
 - Cow's milk does not have the proper concentration of nutrients to support a rapidly growing baby, and may cause an allergic reaction.
 - Cow's milk also has a high concentration of protein, sodium, potassium, and chloride, which is hard on an infant's kidneys and may cause dehydration.
 - When cow's milk is introduced at 1 year of age, only whole cow's milk should be given unless otherwise prescribed by a physician.
5. Do not introduce fruit juices during the first 6 months of life.
 - The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) found that fruit juice offers no nutritional benefit and no benefit over whole fruit for infants younger than 6 months.
 - After 6 months, 100% fruit juice may be consumed as part of a well-balanced diet if *limited to 4 – 6 ounces per day*.
 - If juice is given, it should only be fed from a cup without a lid. Avoid offering juice in a bottle or spill-proof (sippy) cup that is easily carried around by an infant.
 - Infants who consume too much juice may not consume enough breast milk, infant formula, or other foods that provide needed nutrients. This can lead to malnutrition.
 - Too much juice can cause an infant to have diarrhea, abdominal pain, bloating, or develop dental caries.

6. Ensure food safety and adequate nutrition when selecting and preparing homemade baby foods.
 - Select meats, vegetables, fruits, or unseasoned table foods that can easily be made into baby foods.
 - Clean work area and equipment, and always start by washing hands!
 - Pure or mash solid foods to the appropriate texture.
 - Do not add salt or sugar to foods.
 - Serve the food right away, or refrigerate or freeze the food for later use.
 - Warm solid foods to body temperature, but do not heat them too much. After warming, mix well and check the temperature to avoid burning baby's mouth.
 - Avoid hot dogs, nuts, grapes, raisins, raw carrots, popcorn, and rounded candies for infants and children younger than 4 years.

7. Monitor each baby individually to find and correct poor growth and/or health.