



Starting Solids: A Simple First Foods Guide

A practical, supportive guide for your baby's first foods



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Educational Use Only: This resource provides general infant-feeding education and shares caregiver experience. It is not medical, nutritional, feeding-therapy, or emergency advice and does not replace individualized guidance from your child's pediatrician or other qualified healthcare professional. Feeding readiness, allergy risk, and safe textures vary by child. Always supervise your baby while eating and prepare foods in developmentally appropriate forms. Seek emergency medical care for choking or signs of a severe allergic reaction.



Getting Started With Solids

Use this printable card as a gentle starting point when your baby is developmentally ready for solids – usually around 6 months. Breast milk or infant formula remains the main nutrition source from 6 to 12 months; solids gradually become a bigger part of the day. Breast milk, infant formula, or a combination remains an important source of nutrition while complementary foods gradually become a bigger part of the day.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Do you know what to do if your baby starts choking? Have you taken an infant CPR/first-aid course?
- Can baby sit upright with support and do they have good head and neck control?
- Can baby open their mouth for food and swallow instead of pushing food out?
- Is baby alert, seated, and closely supervised throughout the meal?

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Start with a small amount and follow your baby's hunger and fullness cues.
- Introduce foods thoughtfully. Simple meals can make it easier to notice reactions as new foods are added.
- Keep it safe. Avoid honey before 12 months and added sugars, limit high-sodium foods, and choose developmentally appropriate textures.

SET UP FOR SUCCESS

Choose a time when your baby is awake, calm, and comfortable, then keep the first experiences relaxed and simple:

- Seat your baby upright with steady support.
- Start with a small amount and keep the meal short.
- Stay close and supervise throughout the entire meal.
- Expect plenty of exploring—touching, smearing, dropping, gagging*, very little are all common at first.



*Gagging is different from choking; caregivers should know how to recognize and respond to a choking emergency.

A NOTE ABOUT ALLERGIES

Common allergens can be introduced once your baby is ready for solids, using safe, developmentally appropriate forms. Introduce new allergens one at a time when possible so it is easier to notice a reaction. If your baby has severe eczema, a known food allergy, or has reacted to a food before, talk with your pediatrician before introducing common allergens.

TRY THIS RESPONSIVE RHYTHM

Offer: Provide a manageable amount of food in a texture that supports the baby's current skills.

Observe: Notice the baby's whole-body cues—their posture, movements, facial expressions, sounds, and interest—not only what happens at the mouth.

Respond: Let those cues guide the next step. Continue offering, pause, adjust the pace, provide support, or calmly end the meal.

Reconnect: Keep the interaction warm and pressure-free. A successful meal is not measured by how much is eaten, but by whether the baby feels safe, supported, and heard.



Building Baby's First Meals

There is no single “right” first food or menu for every baby. With guidance from your pediatrician, begin by introducing foods individually before serving blends. Serve foods your family already knows and enjoys—foods that reflect your culture, budget, and what is available to you—then adapt the texture to support your baby's current feeding skills.

MEAL COMPONENT IDEAS

IRON + PROTEIN

Beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey, fish, shellfish, egg, beans, lentils, peas, chickpeas, tofu, tempeh, hummus, smooth nut or seed butter (thinned or mixed into another food) or iron-fortified infant cereal.



ENERGY + TEXTURE

Rice, oats, barley, corn, millet, quinoa, couscous, bulgur, potato, sweet potato, yam, pasta, noodles, bread, tortilla, plantain, cassava, polenta, or unsweetened cereal.



COLOR + FLAVOR

Vegetables, fruits, fresh or dried herbs, mild spices, plain full-fat yogurt, avocado, coconut milk for cooking, or a small amount of olive, avocado, sesame, or another culturally familiar oil.



FOUR SIMPLE STARTER RECIPES

SWEET POTATO PUREE

Ingredients:

- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and diced

Steps:

1. Steam or boil 12–15 minutes, until very soft.
2. Mash or blend with warm water, breast milk, or prepared infant formula to desired texture.
3. Cool to lukewarm before serving.

Why parents like it: Sweet potatoes are naturally soft and offer fiber plus vitamins A and C.

Texture tip: Blend very smooth for early eaters; thicken to a chunkier puree gradually as baby develops.

APPLE + PEAR MASH

Ingredients:

- 1 apple, peeled and cored
- 1 pear, peeled and cored

Steps:

1. Dice fruit into small pieces.
2. Steam 8–10 minutes, until fork-tender.
3. Mash or blend, and cool before serving.

Why parents like it: This naturally sweet combination has a mild flavor and is easy to portion and freeze for later.

Texture tip: Apple and pear purées can be naturally thin and watery. For a thicker texture, stir in a small amount of iron-fortified infant oatmeal cereal.

AVOCADO + BANANA MASH

Ingredients:

- 1/2 ripe avocado
- 1/2 ripe banana

Steps:

1. Scoop avocado into a bowl.
2. Add banana and mash until creamy.

Why parents like it: A no-cook option with a creamy texture and healthy fats.

Texture tip: Thin with breast milk or prepared infant formula if needed. For a thicker mash with a little more texture, leave some soft lumps instead of blending completely smooth.

CARROT + PEA PUREE

Ingredients:

- 1 medium carrot, peeled and diced
- 1/2 cup peas, fresh or frozen.

Steps:

1. Steam carrot and peas 10–12 minutes, until very soft.
2. Blend thoroughly with water, breast milk, or prepared infant formula.
3. Check carefully for skins or lumps before serving.

Why parents like it: Carrots add natural sweetness; peas bring plant-based protein and fiber.

Texture tip: For very early eaters, strain if needed for a smoother texture.