

Section 9:

Puree Potions

Solids Hocus Pocus

There are many recommendations out there on how and when to start your baby on foods by the spoon. Most are geared toward maximizing nutrition and minimizing allergy risks. This is not rocket science. Your baby will not say on his high school graduation day, “Why did you not start me on vegetables first, mother?” So, if you have no food allergies in your family, and your baby is sitting up supported (usually 5-6 months), you can venture down the road of happy eating. If there is a history of food allergies in your family, then you may want to take it more slowly and wait until she is closer to 6 months of age. There is no need to put cereal in the bottle before this. Give the first solid food on a spoon. Babies need to practice eating with all of their mouth muscles. Also, do not wait until she is 8 or 9 months old to start solids. This may cause your child to have texture issues and feeding aversions. I say this especially to parents of breast-fed infants, since sometimes they seem to be content just snacking away at the breast throughout the day.

Start with whatever puree food you want to! Rice cereal is a common first food, but it is absolutely tasteless, so you may want to start with a vegetable or fruit and then mix rice cereal with it. Wait 3-4 days between any new foods. Then you can try mixtures of those foods. If you cook at home, I highly recommend buying a small food processor. Add the soft parts of the food you make into the food processor along with the natural food juices, broth or added water and blend until it is the consistency that you want. Just be careful with the salt. You can always add more salt to your own food later.

Diet Dilemma: Sample Menu

Between 5-6 months you will probably be giving your baby cereal or oatmeal with fruit in the morning (1-2 Tbsp at first, then 3-5), and by 7 months, add lunch consisting of a jar of vegetable and a fruit, then add

dinner by 8-9 months consisting of cereal with a vegetable (several ounces) plus or minus fruit for dessert.

By 9 months, she will be happily sitting at your table for every meal, and possibly starting to experiment with some soft table food. Throughout this process, make sure that you are allowing her to touch food (even the messy ones) with her hands and her mouth. You will give the majority of what she eats, but she should be allowed to experiment also. Babies will naturally change to the next stage in baby food. There is no set time on when to do this. Feel free to try food that you can easily flatten between your fingers. This even includes tender chicken breast. Let the child be your guide. If she appears to have a difficult time with it, then wait a few more weeks. Jar baby food is somewhat bland, so if all of a sudden she is not eating well, she may be ready to eat what you are eating. If you can smash it between your fingers, including meat, fish, etc, she can have it. Cheerios and finger puffs are great! Just a few things to avoid:

***THE FOLLOWING MAY BE IN CHART FORM:**

honey until age 12 months, eggs until age 2 if family allergy (Otherwise you can start them at 9 months), nuts and shellfish until age 3, berries are okay usually, but watch for facial rashes, peanut butter until age 18-24 months-age 3y if family allergy (Just be careful; peanut butter can stick to the roof of the mouth and cause gagging).

Mr. Milk Is feeling Left Out: Do I keep the milk feeds the same?

At 6 months a baby is still feeding about 26-30 ounces of formula or breast milk per day, so he will have 5-6 bottles a day. You may find that he is hungrier for his solids if they are given to him before the milk. On the other hand, it may be that he needs a little milk to satisfy his immediate hunger before you offer solids. Try both and see what happens. You may even have to wait an hour between the two. Some babies will start doing a solid or liquid feeding every 2 hours again, because they can't take the milk and food all in one sitting. Remember,

at 6 months, Junior is still getting the majority of his calories from his milk. The solid food is mostly practice.

By 8-9 months of age, your baby will be getting on average 16-18oz milk per day. This will be through 3 or 4 liquid feedings per day, and he will be up to 2-3 solid feedings per day. You may choose to offer water in a sippy cup during feeding times to wash food down with, and offer the milk feedings in the morning upon awakening, before naps and bedtime. Juice is not a requirement, but 4-6oz, mixed with or without water, is acceptable in the sippy cup.

Remember to have the sippy cup accessible to your child throughout the day. This is how she learns to recognize her thirst, and use the cup on her own. Before she can realize this, you may need to offer it and tip it for her every half-hour or so during the day. Sometimes when our children are upset or frustrated, it is because they are simply thirsty. Give her a drink and see what happens!