

When to Introduce Solid Foods¹

Donna Davis²

If you've ever been responsible for feeding an infant, you'd probably recall the struggle to know when was the right time to start feeding the baby solid foods. I remember both my mother and mother-in-law urging me not only to start my baby on formula, but to also put a little cereal in that formula, certain that my baby couldn't possibly be getting enough to eat. Apparently, this is common, although not so wise, counsel.

According to experts, most babies aren't ready for solid food until between four to six months of age. Some of the benchmarks to look for before starting babies on solids is that they can sit up, they drool when they're hungry, they open their mouth when they see a spoon approaching and they don't push the spoon out with their tongue. At this point, the baby is ready for infant rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula, and it should be soupy at first.

Once babies have grown accustomed to cereal, at about six to seven months of age, you can start adding other foods to their diet, but one at a time! According to Linda Bobroff at the University of Florida, you need to wait two to three days between new foods in order to watch for signs of an allergic

reaction. Signs of allergies can include stomachache, diarrhea, skin rash, or wheezing.

Two other taboos to be aware of regard honey and juice. Bobroff says never feed a baby honey, as it can cause botulism poisoning in babies under a year old, and never put juice in a bottle. The bottle should be reserved for water, breastmilk, or formula. Too much juice will spoil babies' appetites for other foods they need.

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 2. Donna Davis, Senior Producer, Family Album Radio, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. Reviewed by Linda Bobroff, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida.

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