

FEEDING YOUR BABY:

Babies aren't robots, so it's silly to think that each child will tolerate or want the same foods at the same time. Within certain constraints, however, the following general advice applies:

1. Breast-feed or formula feed your baby exclusively for the first 2 to 6 months. Breast milk or formula should be the source of almost all milk calories in the first 12 months of life
2. At 2 months or so, it's okay to start one or two ounces of water, but young babies don't really need it since breast milk or formula is about 90 percent water anyway.
3. You may give baby apple juice or white grape juice if your child likes it. This may have the helpful effect of loosening the stools somewhat if the baby is constipated. Avoid citrus juices (orange, grapefruit) until 6 or more months because of the acid intolerance.
4. Solid baby foods aren't usually introduced until 4 to 6 months. Babies can't coordinate their tongue-swallow reflex until about 3 months of age, so don't start before then. Some feeding problems might be more likely when solids are started too early,
5. When starting solid foods, pick a time of day when both you and your baby are healthy, well-rested, and willing to try new things. Usually start out once or twice a day, then, increase to three-or four times as you both gain experience. Don't force your child to eat when they are not hungry; you'll invariably lose any such battles over eating.
6. Generally it is best not to introduce more than one or two new foods each week. That way if your baby does have a reaction to a new food, it can be isolated as the cause. Most such reactions aren't due to allergies as much as the baby coming down with some other illness at the same time.
7. Start with the cereals first. Rice cereal can be mixed with formula or breast milk into a mush, then offered on a baby spoon. Don't be surprised if your baby spits out as much as they take in at first. One or so teaspoonfuls may be the limit early on, but it will increase with experience. Progress through barley, oatmeal and wheat cereals to taste.
8. Next, come the yellow vegetables, offered before fruits so that the baby will get used to eating different solids for their own taste before sweeter fruits are started. Follow with green vegetables, then fruits. Generally we don't recommend the high calorie fruit desserts unless your baby has a specific problem with poor weight gain.
9. Some softer table foods such as mashed potatoes or mashed peas can be offered off of your plate when the baby shows an interest. You can also puree your own leftover fruits and vegetables, and freeze in small portions until used later on.
10. Once your baby is handling pureed foods well, start to increase the thickness and chunkiness with Stages 2 and 3.
11. Finger foods such as Cheerios are an ideal food help your baby develop hand-eye coordination and to begin self-feeding techniques. Begin soggy with milk, and gradually serve them straight out of the box.
12. Meats aren't introduced until 8 to 10 months, usually as mixed dinners with vegetables or pasta. Begin with chicken and turkey, ending up with beef. As they get older, and if your child has teeth, you can begin serving scrambled hamburger or stringed chicken to your child.
13. The newest thinking in avoiding food allergies is the 'hygiene theory', that is, by introducing foods commonly associated with allergies before one year of age, one can actually reduce the number of children who are allergic to those foods. So, eggs can be started at 6 months, and begin peanut butter by 9 months.
14. Try your best to avoid having your child eat junk food and high calorie snacks, or drink too many juice drinks. Feed them when they are hungry, not necessarily when it's convenient.

BON APPETITE!