

Aeroflow Breastpumps

Introduction to Complementary Foods

Introducing Complementary Foods

Introducing new foods to your baby can be fun! When your baby is about 6 months old, they can start eating foods and drinks along with breast milk. This helps them get the nutrients they need to grow.^{1,2,3}

Why Complementary Foods Are Important

Complementary foods help your baby get important nutrients like zinc, protein, vitamin D, choline, potassium, and iron.^{1,2,3} These foods also let your baby try different flavors and textures. Remember to include your family's favorite foods and traditions.

When to Start

You should start giving your baby nutrient-rich foods at 6 months old. Try not to start before 4 months.^{1,2,3} How do you know if your baby is ready? Look for these signs:

- Can control their head and neck
- Can sit up with support
- Brings objects to their mouth
- Tries to grab small objects like toys or food
- Swallows food instead of pushing it out

It's normal for kids to be picky eaters as they grow. Be patient and offer the same food in different ways.^{1,2,3}

Types of Complementary Foods

In the past, parents thought they had to introduce foods in a certain order. Now, we know it's better to give a variety of foods from different groups like protein, vegetables, fruits, calcium-rich foods, and whole grains.^{1,2,3} It might take 8 to 10 tries for a baby to accept a new food. If your baby eats infant cereals, offer different kinds like oats, barley, and multi-grain instead of just rice cereal.^{1,2,3} Too much rice cereal may expose your baby to arsenic.⁴

Foods to Avoid

- Added sugar and salt
- Honey and unpasteurized foods and drinks (these can make babies very sick)

- Before 12 months, don't give 100% fruit or vegetable juices (do not need the added calories)

Texture and Consistency

Giving your baby different tastes and textures helps them:

- Develop motor skills by picking up food
- Learn to chew
- Enjoy a variety of foods

Start with smooth or mashed foods, then move to finely chopped or ground foods as they get older. Encourage self-feeding and exploration.^{1,2,3} Here is a great website for more information:

<https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/infants>.

Safety Tips

Some foods can cause choking, like hot dogs, candy, nuts, raw carrots, grapes, popcorn, and chunks of peanut butter.^{1,2,3} To keep your baby safe:

- Offer foods in small, easy-to-eat pieces
- Make sure your baby is sitting in a high chair or another safe place
- Always watch your baby during meals
- Don't put cereal or solid foods in a bottle

Introducing Allergenic Foods

Parents often worry about introducing foods that can cause allergies, like peanuts, eggs, dairy, tree nuts, wheat, shellfish, fish, and soy. There's no proof that delaying these foods prevents allergies. Introduce them along with other complementary foods.^{1,2,3} Giving peanut-containing foods in the first year can reduce the risk of peanut allergies. Cow's milk should be introduced at 1 year or later.^{1,2,3}

Feeding Techniques

Your baby depends on you for their nutrition. They will decide what and how much to eat.

Learn to recognize your baby's hunger and fullness cues.^{1,2,3}

Hunger Cues	Fullness Cues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches for or points to food • Opens mouth when offered a spoon or food • Gets excited when sees food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pushes food away • Closes mouth when food offered • Turns head away from food • Uses hand motions or makes sounds

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses hand motions or makes sounds | |
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What If I Have Questions?

If you are interested in learning more, this Aeroflow class expands on some of the topics discussed above:

- Solid Foods for the Breastfed Infant

To register for this class, log into your portal or click [here](#).

References:

1. <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/foods-and-drinks/when-to-introduce-solid-foods.html>
3. <https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/infants>
4. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/reduce-arsenic.aspx>