



Quick Guide to Starting Solids. It's Easier than You May Think!

Do

1) Make your baby's first meal a family meal.

Start when your baby is clearly asking for some of your food. Bring your baby as close to your table as possible and share some of the same food. Shared meals are better than kids' meals. Stop each meal when your baby is starting to get full. Learn to notice.

2) Make your baby's first food a real food.

Choose an avocado, banana, or sweet potato (cooked until soft). Let your baby handle and smell the food first. Then mash some up and enjoy together. You can add some breast milk (or formula) to thin your baby's portion. Whole grain porridges, such as oatmeal or brown rice cereal have also been used for generations as first foods for babies. Even meat or egg yolk.

3) Give your baby a broad variety of taste experiences.

The time between starting solids and starting to walk is an unrepeatable window when it is easiest to learn to like new foods. Once babies start walking, neophobia – a fear of new foods and new food sources – often starts to build. This makes sense. Historically children might have toddled outside and picked a berry or leaf that was terrible for them. Toddlers are designed to be suspicious of new fruits and vegetables. Now is the time to introduce lots of healthy flavors that you want your child to enjoy later.

Don't

1) Don't wait 3-5 days between foods.

Introducing new foods rapidly – and feeding mixtures of foods – leads to more adventurous happy eaters. As long as babies are tolerating the foods well, full steam ahead! This doesn't increase allergy risk. It does take a little more work to detect the culprit if a child does develop a food allergy, but over 90% of children never will.

2) Don't delay foods to avoid allergies.

Early on, children's immune systems are trying to learn what is normal and what to react against later. There is no good evidence that delaying any food beyond 6 months decreases allergy risk – and there is some evidence that the opposite may be true. I do recommend avoiding highly allergic foods when kids are on antibiotics or have a tummy illness. And do avoid foods that might cause choking or might carry infections (such as raw or undercooked fish, meat, or eggs).

3) Don't give up.

It takes an average of 6 to 10 tries (and up to 15 tries) before a baby likes an unfamiliar food. When feeding babies, 94% of parents gave up on foods before 6 tries, and only 1 or 2 in a hundred would try 10 different times. If your baby doesn't like it today, try again soon.

Bon appetit!

For Dr. Greene's complete feeding system,
stories and scientific references see *Feeding Baby Green*