

## **STARTING SOLID FOOD**

### **How to Start**

Always offer solid food with a spoon and do not put it in a bottle. Make sure baby is sitting up in a high chair to allow proper posture while swallowing. Begin offering solids at a family meal to encourage interest in the foods while others are eating at the same time. Offer a spoonful at first and talk with your baby while feeding. They may reject the food at first, but this is a normal reaction until they get used to the feel of food and the idea of moving it around in their mouth. If they get frustrated, you can offer some formula/breastmilk then a spoonful of food then more formula/breastmilk. Increase the amount of food you give gradually, starting with a teaspoon or two.

Give your baby one new food at a time and wait 2-3 days before trying another. After each new food, watch for any allergic reactions such as diarrhea, vomiting or rash. If any of these occur, stop that food and call the pediatrician.

### **Types of Foods**

You can begin with any food: Cereal, fruit, veggie or meat. Just be sure it is a single ingredient food to start. Cereals can be prepared with formula or breast milk to mix it to an oatmeal-like consistency. There are many types including rice, oatmeal and barley as well as mixed-grain cereals. Start with one type first to look for allergic reactions to each grain before you try any mixed-grain cereals. Offer solids at breakfast and dinner times with the family. Then you can begin offering food at lunchtime as well.

By now your baby should be eating three meals a day, consisting of fruit, vegetables, meat and cereal and drinking formula or breastmilk.

Once your baby has gone through all the stage 1 foods, you can move on to stage 2 foods which are usually combinations of different flavors and are slightly thicker. Offer a wide variety of foods including foods made with egg, fish and nuts (peanut powder is now sold in most stores which can be mixed in with cereals and other foods to safely exposed babies to nut products without the risk of choking). You can also start yogurt at this point.

### **Finger Foods**

Once your baby can sit up and bring objects to their mouth, you can try finger foods to help them learn to feed themselves. Make sure anything you offer is soft, easy to swallow and cut in small pieces. Easily dissolvable puffs or "stars" sold in the baby food aisle are good to start with and other ideas are cheerios, small banana pieces, scrambled eggs and soft fruits and vegetables. Once they are able to eat these soft foods really well you can try small pieces of chicken and well cooked pasta.

Firm round foods like grapes, cooked carrots, hotdogs, meat sticks and chunks of cheese should always be cut in very small pieces. Cut hot dogs in half lengthwise first and then small pieces. Because small children often swallow without chewing, do not give children under age 4 yrs the following choking hazard foods: nuts, seeds, gum, hard candy, raw vegetables or popcorn.

As your baby eats more and more table foods, they will imitate the way you eat. For your child's sake as well as your own, watch how much salt and fat you have in your diet. Provide a good role model by eating a variety of healthy foods.