

STARTING SOLIDS

The best time to introduce solid foods is when your baby has the skills needed to eat (around 4-6 months of age). Look for these signs of readiness for starting solid foods!



- **Good head and neck control**
- **Can sit up with support**
- **No longer has the tongue-thrust reflex (which causes babies to push food out of the mouth)**
- **Can transfer food to the back of the mouth to swallow**
- **Shows an interest in food (by watching others eat or reaching for food)**

STARTING SOLIDS



The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding as the sole source of nutrition for your baby for about 6 months. After introducing solid foods to your baby's diet, continue breastfeeding up to 2 years or beyond, as long as mutually desired by you and your child.

Learn more about starting solids at www.breastfeeddurham.org

STARTING SOLIDS & MAINTAINING BREASTFEEDING

You don't have to choose between breastfeeding and starting solids—you can do both!

01.

Starting Solids

Most babies are ready to start solid foods at around 6 months old, but every baby is different! First foods should be soft, easy to swallow, and rich in nutrients. Try to offer a wide variety of tastes and textures. Start with small portions and gradually increase the amount as your baby becomes more comfortable.



02.

Breastfeeding is Still the Main Course

Solid foods are intended to complement, not replace, breastfeeding. Babies may start to breastfeed less often as they eat more solids, typically starting around 9-12 months. Once solids are introduced, breastfeeding continues to play a significant role in your baby's growth and development.



03.

Breast First, then the Rest

It's recommended to offer breast milk before solid foods. As your baby gains more experience with solids you can begin offering them before or between breastfeeding sessions. This approach ensures that your baby's primary nutritional needs are met through breast milk while allowing them to explore different foods.



04.

Trust the Process

Solids are a learning experience—it's okay if your baby eats very little at first! Introducing solids is a big milestone for both babies and parents. Breastfeeding provides a safety net while your baby experiments with new tastes and textures. You're building a foundation for lifelong healthy eating habits, and that's a big win!



Introducing Solids

A visual roadmap for families and their providers

★ 0-6 Months

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months of life. Breast milk offers optimal nutrition and immune support for your infant. There is no need for water, juice, or other foods during this time.

Monitor for signs of readiness for solid foods closer to 6 months old, but no earlier than 4 months old.

Maintain frequent, on-demand breastfeeding (about 8-12 times feedings per day).

Signs of Readiness

- ★ Sitting up with little or no support
- ★ Good head and neck control
- ★ Reaching for and showing interest in foods
- ★ Loss of tongue-thrust reflex

★ 6-12 Months

Begin introducing solids around 6 months in addition to breast milk. It's important to remember that solid foods are a complement of breastfeeding, not a replacement.

Offer a wide variety of flavors and textures to your infant. You can start with iron-rich foods and mashed fruits and vegetables. Offer solid foods once a day and gradually increase to 2-3 meals by 9-12 months.



Continue breastfeeding on demand (before or after meals based on your baby's cues). Avoid foods that are choking hazards (nuts, whole grapes, raw carrots), honey, and added sugar/salt.

★ 12 Months & Beyond

By 12 months old, babies are eating a healthy mix of breast milk and solid foods. Continue to offer your baby a wide variety of healthy foods. Encourage self-feeding with safe finger foods and cups for water.

You may continue breastfeeding as long as it mutually desired. Breast milk still provides important nutrition, immune support, and comfort.

Your Support Team

Ask your pediatrician, lactation consultant, or healthcare provider for help with:

- ★ Navigating food allergies/intolerances or feeding difficulties
- ★ Adjusting feeding plans for developmental concerns or weight gain issues
- ★ Incorporating culturally and religiously inclusive foods
- ★ Supporting continued breastfeeding