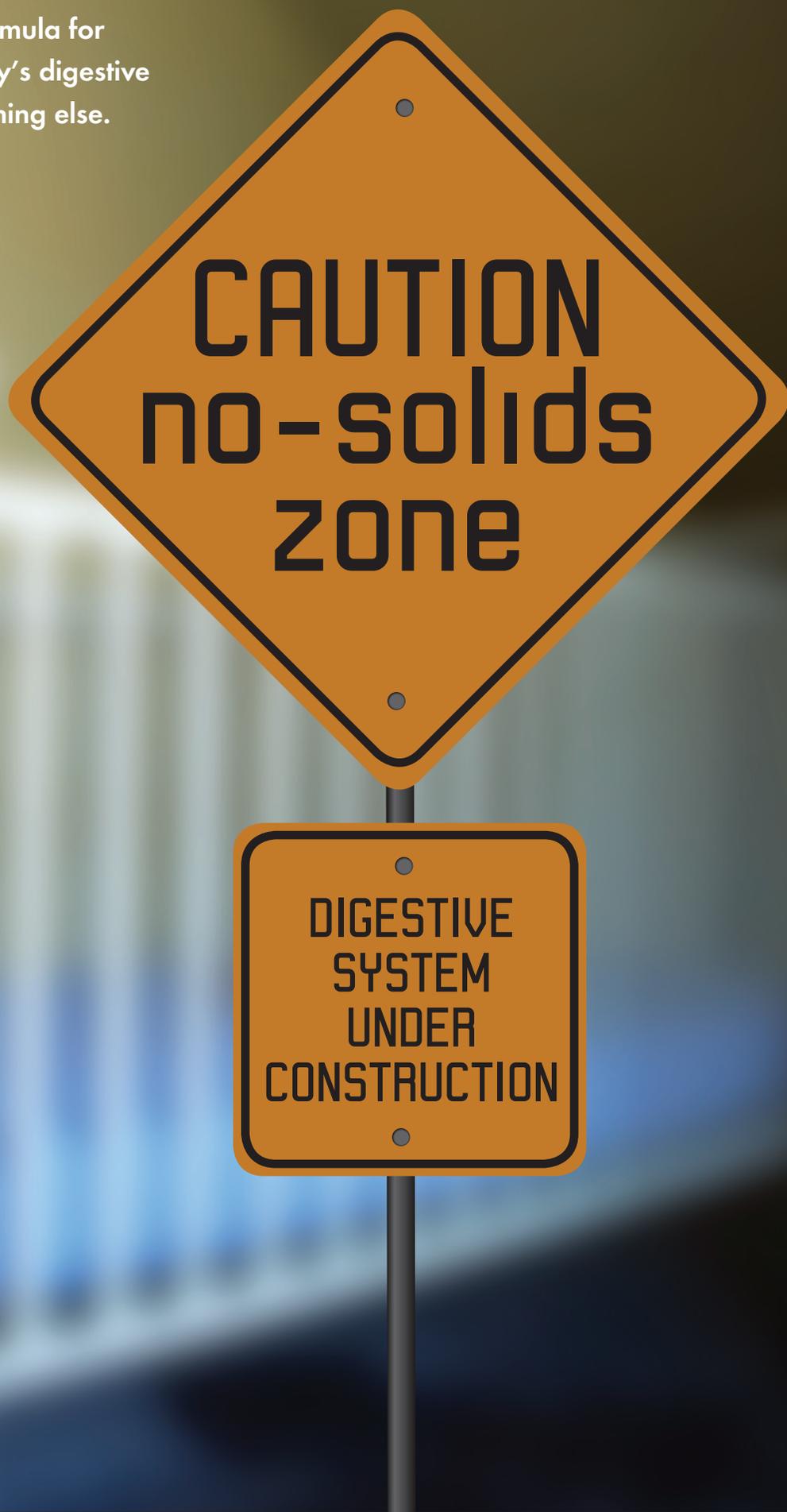


Feed only breastmilk or formula for the first 4 to 6 months. Baby's digestive system isn't ready for anything else.



welcome baby! (NOW WHAT?!)

The first six months of your baby's life is a time of "firsts." The first smile. The first laugh. Perhaps even the first tooth. It is also a time in which new and experienced moms alike tend to have the most questions about feeding their babies.

Below is a list of commonly asked questions about what and when to feed babies who are between the ages of 0-6 months:

What should I feed my baby?

Breastmilk or iron-fortified formula can meet all your baby's needs for about the first six months.

What about cereal? Doesn't my big baby need more than just breastmilk or formula?

Regardless of size, a baby's digestive system is not mature enough for anything but breastmilk or formula until she is four to six months old. Large babies have the same developmental timeline as smaller babies; their digestive systems are still immature and unable to handle solids. They may drink more breastmilk or formula which will provide them with additional calories.

I fed my other children solids before four months and it didn't hurt them. What's changed?

New research indicates that introducing solids too early—before four months—to a baby's immature digestive system can lead to a variety of allergies and food intolerances.

I'm so exhausted! Will a small amount of cereal in the bottle help my baby sleep through the night?

Babies will sleep through the night when they are ready. Cereal won't help and may be harmful because it can cause a baby to choke.

How will I know when my baby is ready for solid food?

Isn't it amazing how babies can "talk" to moms before having words? Here are some signs that your baby is ready for more than just breastmilk or formula:

- Good head control.
- Opens mouth when seeing a spoon.
- Accepts food from spoon and moves it into his mouth.
- Uses jaw to munch up and down.
- Uses whole hand to grasp objects.

reforming an old tradition

"Tradition is engraved in the mind of my Portuguese mother. When I had my first baby, she wanted to mix cereal with milk and feed it to my daughter in a bottle. She said, 'That's the traditional way.'

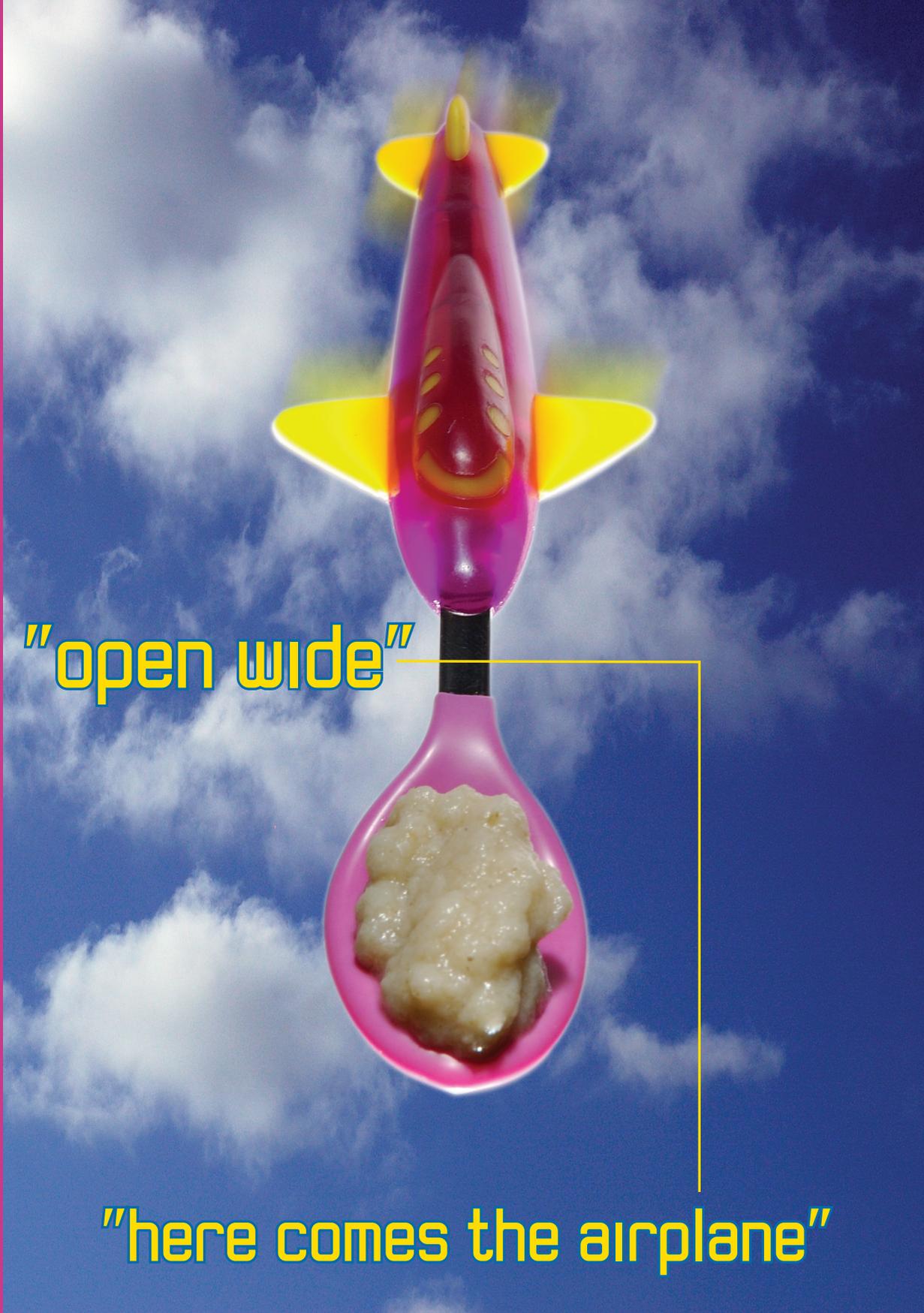
But my doctor had warned me that a baby's stomach isn't able to digest cereal before four to six months of age. And that giving her cereal before that time may not only lead to a lifetime struggle with weight but result in future allergies and other problems. I explained this to my mom, yet she worried. She held strongly to the traditional belief that a fat baby is a healthy baby, and my daughter was thin. So she worried.

There are no magic words that solved this problem for me. I repeatedly and reassuringly told my mom that my daughter was growing at a healthy rate. I showed her my daughter's weight and growth charts. I told her the doctor said her weight was perfectly normal. I even counted the dirty diapers so she could see everything was fine. As time went on my mother mentioned cereal-in-the-bottle less often and she seemed to trust my doctor and me.

Tradition is a powerful thing. Although my heritage is very important to me, thinking a heavy baby is a healthy baby is a tradition I don't want to pass on to my beautiful daughter."



Carla and her daughter



"open wide"

"here comes the airplane"

Introduce solids at 4-6 months.

A TIME OF CELEBRATION: baby's first taste of solid food

Tasting solid food for the first time is an exciting experience for a baby. A new texture. A new flavor. A challenging new skill to learn and celebrate. But remember nothing can really prepare a baby for his or her first taste of solid food. All children react differently so don't be surprised at whatever kind of face your baby makes in response to this brand new experience. Just be sure to have a camera handy to document this wonderful milestone! The following questions and answers may help you in making this first experience with food a happy one.

What's the first food a baby should eat?

Recent research shows that babies can be started on a number of different foods, including pureed meats, vegetables and fruit. Iron-fortified single cereals or pureed meats (especially beef) are good choices for your baby to try first since they are high in iron.

How much and how often should I feed my baby?

Offer small amounts of single-ingredient baby food with a spoon two or three times a day. Stop when he turns his head away from the spoon or refuses to open his mouth. Breastmilk or formula should still be your baby's main source of nutrition.

How do I make my baby's cereal?

Mix about 2-4 tablespoons of single-ingredient cereal with breastmilk or iron-fortified formula until it has the consistency of thin gravy.

How do I introduce different foods to my baby?

Variety is the spice of life! Offer a single food for at least a week. Then try another single-ingredient food. Wait 3 to 5 days before offering a new food to watch for signs of allergies.

How will I know if my baby is allergic to foods?

The most obvious signs of allergies are rashes, itching, swelling and/or redness. Call your doctor if you see any of these signs on your baby's skin.

Should I put baby food in a bottle?

Baby food, including cereal, should always be given with a small spoon—never in a bottle. Giving food in a bottle can cause your baby to choke. It also robs your baby of this exciting new adventure!

What if my baby doesn't like baby food?

Eating is a fun and exciting adventure for babies, but it can take a while for them to get used to it. Continue offering small amounts—about half a teaspoon—on the tip of your baby's tongue and allow time for your baby to gradually explore and get used to this new feeling.

sample meals

Morning snack

1-2 tablespoons rice cereal mixed with breastmilk or iron-fortified formula

Afternoon snack

1-2 tablespoons pureed meat

Four- to six-month-olds still rely mostly on breastmilk or formula to grow and develop. At this age, breastfed babies usually nurse 6 to 8 or more times a day. Formula-fed babies drink about 30 ounces a day.

IS YOUR BABY READY FOR MORE VARIETY?



Between 6-8 months, your baby may be ready for more tastes and textures!

Variety—the spice of life!

How to start?

For your baby, everything is a curiosity and a new experience, and food is quickly becoming her number one interest! She watches you eat. She reaches out for a cup or spoon. She uses her fingers to pick up objects. These are all signs that she may be ready for thicker foods. The following questions and answers may help you learn more about when and how to introduce different textures and foods to your baby.

How can I get my baby to eat a variety of foods?

It takes some babies time to learn to love different foods—but that love starts now! Here's how to teach your baby to enjoy them: Offer him tastes of a pureed or mashed food. If he doesn't like it, try it again over the next few days, or try mixing it with something he does like. If he still doesn't seem to like it, offer a favorite food, and try the new food again the next day. Be patient and keep doing that for at least 10 days—it can take 10-15 tries before he'll eat it!

Let your baby decide what she likes and dislikes.

Everyone has different tastes. Don't let your personal food preferences decide what you give your baby.

What about fruit juice?

Babies don't need fruit juice. Juice can lead to an upset stomach, gas or diarrhea. Fruit, complete with fiber and texture, is a much better choice than fruit juice.

Can my baby have the same food our family eats?

Every baby is different and gets used to new textures at their own pace. However, once they've gotten used to pureed foods, most babies can slowly advance to lumpier textures. You can now start to introduce small portions of the family's foods, like mashed soft fruits, cooked vegetables, avocados and beans, and offer them to him on his high-chair tray. He can also practice using a cup!

How will I know when my baby is full?

By now, you're familiar with your baby's cry when she's tired, hungry or angry. You will soon know her signs of fullness. She may sit back, turn her head away from food, or push food away. She may slow down her eating or refuse to open her mouth. However she communicates that she's full, respect what she's telling you and follow her cues. Encouraging her to take "just one more bite" is not a good idea and can lead to overeating, overweight and obesity.

Have fun!

Eat with your baby and make feeding time enjoyable and relaxed. Expect things to be messy—it's all part of the fun!

sample meals

Morning

- 2 Tablespoons prepared infant cereal
- 2 Tablespoons pureed or mashed fruit

Afternoon

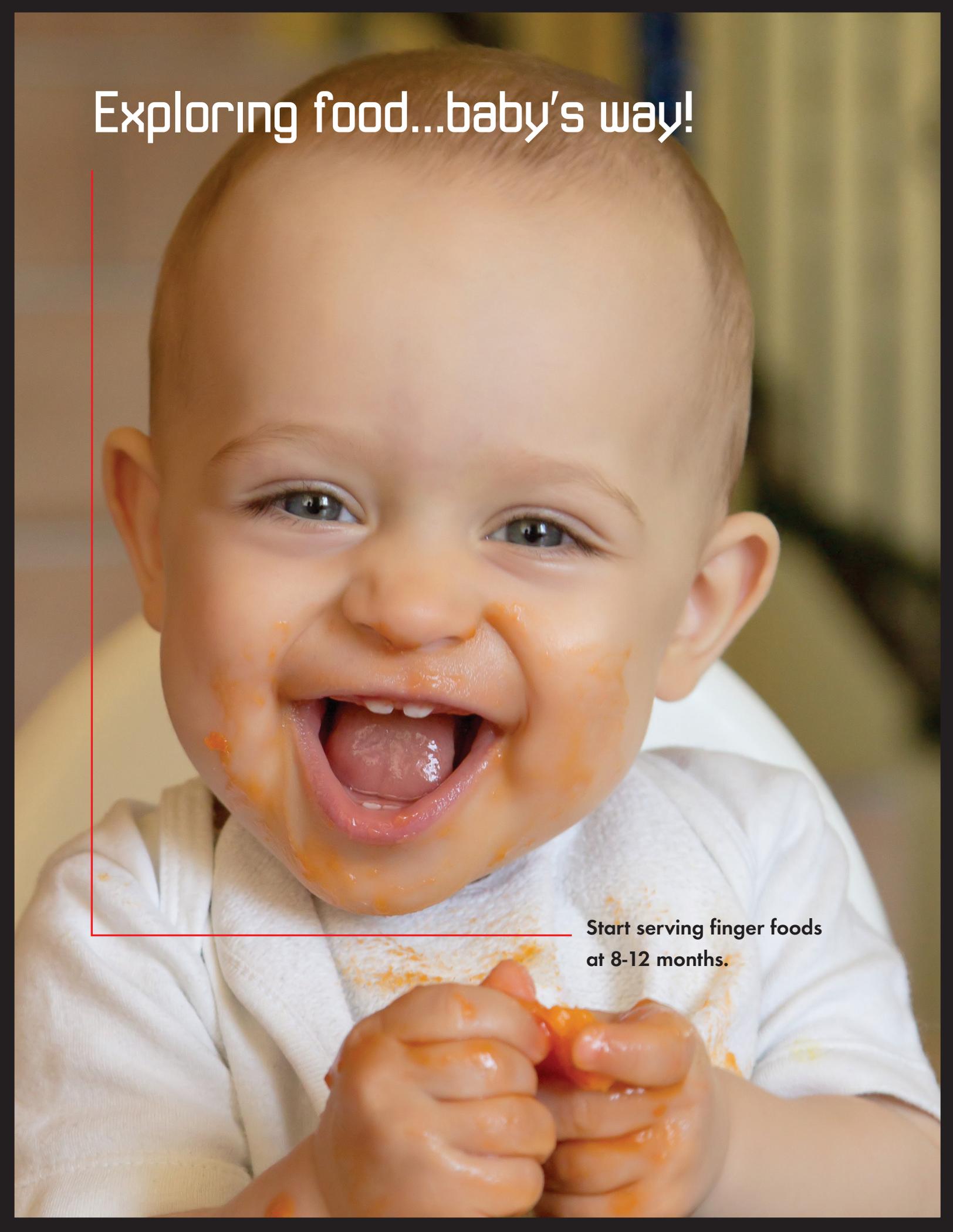
- 2 Tablespoons pureed or mashed vegetables

Evening

- 2 Tablespoons pureed or mashed vegetables or fruit
- 2 Tablespoons pureed or mashed meat

Six- to eight-month-olds still rely mostly on breastmilk or formula to grow and develop. At this age, breastfed babies usually nurse six or more times a day. Formula-fed babies drink about 21-30 ounces a day.

Exploring food...baby's way!

A close-up photograph of a baby with orange food smeared on their face and hands, smiling broadly. The baby is wearing a white shirt. The background is blurred.

**Start serving finger foods
at 8-12 months.**

a time of amazing changes

It hasn't been that long since you brought your baby home from the hospital. What an amazing adventure it's been! Your baby has gone through some truly dramatic changes—changes that have been fueled, no doubt, by good food and a healthy dose of love. It is no wonder these two essential elements are the building blocks for healthy habits that will be enjoyed for a lifetime.

Here are some common questions moms ask about feeding older babies:

Can my baby feed himself yet?

Chances are, your baby has already answered that question! He is probably starting to put things in his mouth, and may be reaching for that spoon. Be patient and expect things to get a little messy, but isn't it great that your baby wants to be independent? And having fun with his food will help your baby enjoy eating and develop other skills.

Are there any foods my baby should not eat yet?

Keep in mind that babies often swallow food without chewing or "gumming." The following foods should be avoided as they can cause your baby to choke: nuts, popcorn, seeds, chips, dried fruit such as raisins, peanut butter, cheese cubes, grapes, hot dogs, uncooked peas and other raw vegetables, and hard candy. Babies should not eat honey until after their first birthday since it can contain harmful bacteria that can make them sick.

What about side dishes like rice and noodles?

Babies enjoy eating plain noodles and white or brown rice with their fingers. Other fun and healthy finger foods include shredded cheese, toast, canned fruit, beans, tofu and crackers. Remember, foods that may seem bland to you are tasty and exciting to your baby. Avoid pre-packaged and processed foods as they tend to have added ingredients such as sugar, salt, and/or preservatives.

What about baby meats?

It is okay to serve the same meat your family enjoys. However, be sure to grind or finely mince the meat to prevent choking. Some examples of good finger foods for older infants include chopped soft cooked chicken or turkey, or small pieces of meatballs or meatloaf.

Are 8- to 12-month-olds past the allergy sensitive stage yet?

Not yet. Infants and young children can still have allergic reactions to foods. Continue to introduce new single-ingredient foods one at a time and 3 to 5 days apart so you can watch for signs of allergy and determine which food has caused the allergy, if one should develop.

What is a healthy snack for my baby?

Dry cereal, yogurt, soft fruit or cooked vegetable, or shredded cheese. Think of snacks as smaller servings of the healthy foods you normally serve at meals, rather than as different foods.

Are there any foods that might help my teething baby?

Tender gums are often soothed by biting and chewing on these foods: toast, dry cereal, crackers, a frozen bagel or a frozen whole peeled banana. As always, never leave your baby alone when she is eating. Some babies can chew quite strongly on these foods so watch closely that no large piece of food breaks off that can choke your baby.

What about cow's milk (whole milk)?

Experts recommend breast milk (or formula, for babies who aren't breastfeeding) and not cow's milk, until around your baby's first birthday to make sure she is getting enough iron.

sample meals

Morning

- 4-6 tablespoons cereal
- 2-4 tablespoons soft fruit

Snack

- 1/4 cup shredded cheese

Afternoon

- 2-4 tablespoons cooked vegetables
- 2-4 tablespoons cooked kidney beans

Snack

- Water in a cup
- Piece of toast or bagel

Evening

- 2-4 tablespoons cooked vegetables
- 2-4 tablespoons minced meat
- 2-4 tablespoons soft fruit

At this age, breastfed babies usually nurse four or more times a day. Formula-fed babies drink about 24 to 28 ounces a day. Older babies need more food. As babies begin to eat more solid food, their need for breastmilk or formula will decrease.

Time for Textures?

About 4-6 Months:

By now, your baby has probably been enjoying iron-fortified baby cereal and thin, smooth purees of meats, vegetables and fruit, along with breastmilk or formula. She is learning to eat and enjoy food, and likely already has some favorites!



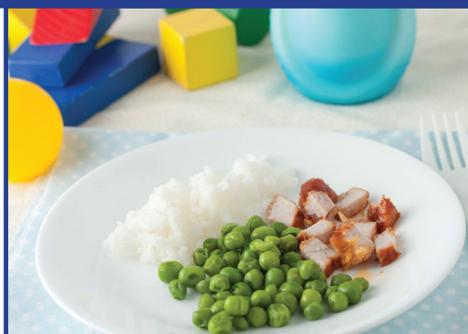
About 6-8 Months:

Your baby is probably ready for new eating adventures! Introduce foods that have a mashed texture and start to practice using a cup. You may want to try foods like mashed fruits, vegetables and beans.



About 8-12 Months:

Now is a good time to get your baby used to even more textures. Offer him soft or well-cooked foods and finger foods like shredded cheese, well-cooked vegetables, scrambled eggs, mashed fish, tofu, diced soft fruits, and crackers. Allow your baby to feed himself, even if things get messy! Don't give him foods that he could choke on, like popcorn, hot dogs, gummy foods, seeds, nuts, raisins, and grapes.



Making Homemade Baby Foods — It's Easier Than You Think!



Some jarred baby foods contain added sugar, salt and starch, which your baby doesn't need. Homemade baby food can be healthier, help you save money and get your baby used to the foods your family eats.

Here's how to make foods for your baby at home:

- You can use a fork, baby food grinder or a blender.
- Wash all equipment in hot soapy water. Rinse and dry.
- Prepare fresh fruits and vegetables by scrubbing and peeling off the skin; remove stems, pits and seeds.
- Prepare meats by removing bones, skin and visible fat.
- Drain and rinse canned vegetables and fruits.
- Steam or boil foods until soft.
- Let foods cool to room temperature.
- Mash, puree or grind food by adding small amounts of cooking water, breast milk or formula until the mixture is smooth.
- **DO NOT ADD** sugar, honey, maple syrup, Karo syrup, salt, fats or oils. They are not necessary and can be harmful to your baby.

Keeping Things Safe:

- Spoon the food your baby will eat into a small bowl. Feeding from the original container will cause leftovers to spoil quickly.
- Seal the container tightly and put it into the refrigerator right away.
- Use the stored baby food within 2-3 days. After that, throw it away.
- Don't chew your baby's food before giving it to her or share utensils. It could make your baby sick!

Time-Saving Tips:

- Freeze pureed baby food in ice cube trays. When solid, store in freezer bags. Use within 3 months.

