

How to start solids:

1. Ensure that baby is developmentally ready to begin solids:

- a. Discuss with your pediatrician and get approval from them
- b. Wait till around 6 months of age. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and WHO (World Health Organization) both recommend starting solids once baby is 6 months old.
- c. There is a lot of conflicting recommendations about when to start your baby on solids. Every baby develops differently. There is currently no research to support starting solids before 4 months and it may increase the risk of food aversion, food allergies and gastrointestinal issues if started too early.
- d. Look for following signs of "readiness"
 - i. Baby is able to sit on the floor with little support when you place them in the seated position. If they are unable to support their body in a seated position, this can make eating very uncomfortable for them.
 - ii. Baby is able to hold their head up for a few minutes at a time without your support. If they are unable to hold their head, then this will make eating very difficult for them, and increases their risk of choking when starting solids.
 - iii. Baby is able to bring objects to their mouth with their hands. Encourage your baby to mouth or explore safe objects like clean spoons or teethers. This is an important step of learning how to eat.
 - iv. Baby is interested in watching you eat during meals or tries to grab or mouths eating while they watch you eat. They learn by watching you and this is why even if your baby is not ready to start eating, letting them watch you eat at meals is helpful.
 - v. One sign of readiness alone is not enough to start solids.

2. How to schedule solids:

- a. Starting solids is about teaching your baby a new skill. How to eat food other than milk.
- b. This may seem simple to us as adults since we have been eating for a long time but learning to chew, and move food in their mouth, then swallow are important skills that can take some time and coordination for your baby to master.
- c. For this reason, try to avoid keeping your baby hungry for solids. It is best when you are starting solids to feed your baby solids 15-30 minutes after a full milk feeding (formula or breastmilk).

- d. When you are first starting solids, you will only need to offer one meal per day. If you would like to offer a second meal some days, you can. It does not need to be consistent day to day. You can feed solids once in the morning on Saturday then once in the afternoon on Sunday then twice on Monday. You have a lot of flexibility on scheduling when you first start.
- e. Think of introducing solids as practice to set your child up to teach them how to eat.
- f. If you are introducing allergens, consider offering allergens earlier in the day so that you can observe your child afterwards.
- g. When first starting solids at 6 months you only need to offer one meal per day. By 9/10 months you will need to offer 3 meals a day consistently.
- h. You want to avoid introducing solids while your baby is too hungry or too tired. It is best to offer them solids when first starting at a time when they are not overly hungry or tired. This will help them with building and learning skills to eat.

Introducing Solids

6 MONTHS



1 Meal + Breastmilk/Formula

8 MONTHS



2 Meals + Breastmilk/Formula

10 MONTHS



3 Meals + Breastmilk/Formula

12 MONTHS



3 Meals + 1-3 Snacks +
Breastmilk/Formula (if desired)

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3. Introducing allergens:

- a. Current guidelines (American Academy of Pediatrics) recommend introducing allergens as soon as you begin to introduce solids.
- b. There is no evidence to delay the introduction of food allergens when you introduce solids.
- c. There is evidence to suggest that earlier introduction of food allergens can help protect your baby from developing food allergies.
- d. Always discuss with your pediatrician.

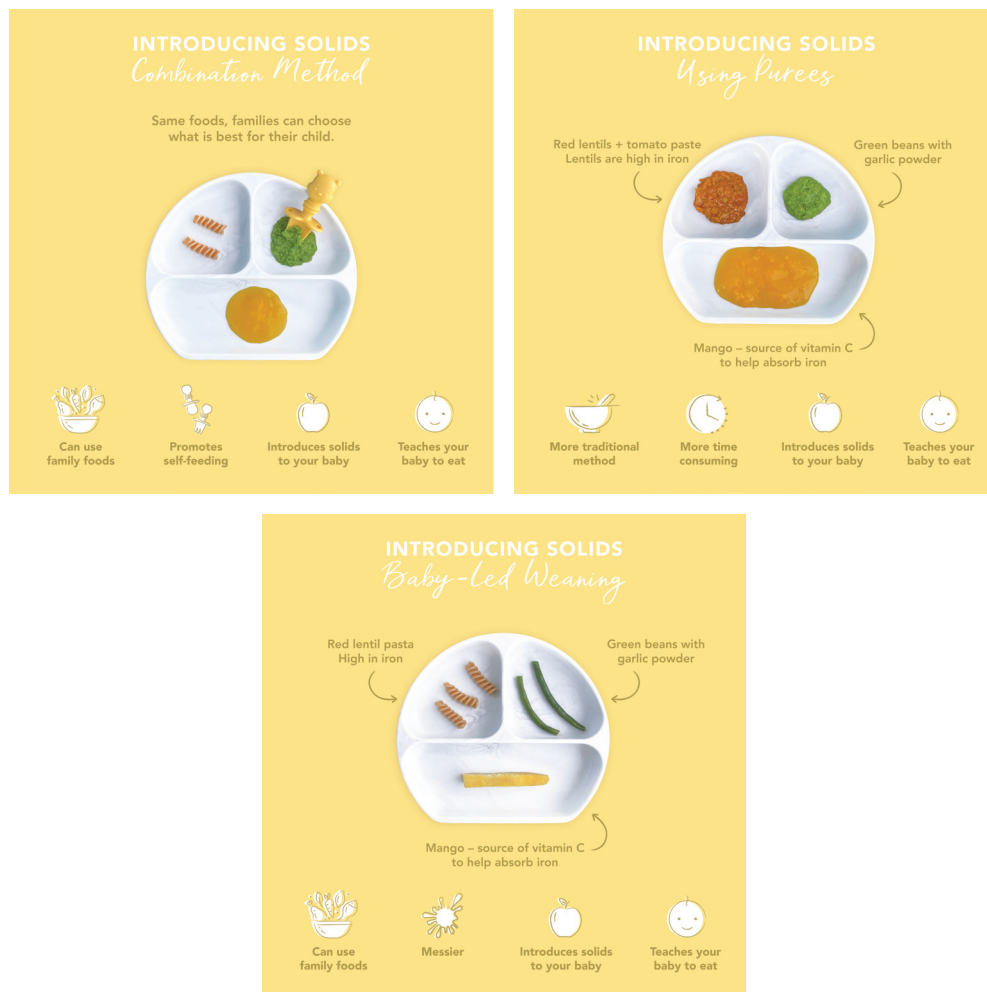
4. How to choose which foods:

- a. There are many myths about starting solids.
- b. The best foods to offer your baby are foods that you eat as a family. This is because babies need a very small amount of food and it is important for them to learn to eat the foods of their family. They are also more likely to eat foods they see others eating.
- c. Foods to focus on when you are starting solids are foods that are rich in iron like beef, lamb, chicken, eggs, spinach, beans and tofu.
- d. Babies are born with some iron stores which begin to run out at around 4-6 months, so it is important that they start eating iron in their food when they start solids.
- e. Other foods to introduce to your baby include foods that you eat like fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, fish, eggs, nuts, seeds and more.



5. BLW vs. Purees:

- Both baby led weaning and purees are a good way to start solids. You can do one or the other, or a little bit of both!
- The current evidence supports that both baby led weaning and purees are equally good ways to start solids.
- Some families choose a style of introducing solids based on their culture and traditions, others choose a style that resonates with their parenting style.
- Both styles have benefits, but what is most important is that when you start solids is that you slowly challenge your baby with different textures, flavors and colors.
- It is also important that parents are responsive to babies feeding cues. Meaning that parents allow babies to decide how much food to eat. If your baby opens their mouth and leans in towards the food, then continue to offer them food. If they turn their face away, cry or don't open their mouth when you offer food then you should end the meal.
- Making sure the mealtime is a positive experience for you and your baby is a slow progression. It is important that your baby feels comfortable during meals to learn the skills they need to eat.



6. Portions:

- a. When first introducing solids, offer 2-3 tablespoons of food. If your baby seems interested in more food, offer more.
- b. The amount of food your baby will eat will fluctuate day to day and meal to meal. Each baby is different, and it is best to follow their feeding cues.
- c. Avoid comparing how much your baby eats to another baby.

7. Which foods should I avoid?

- a. Honey:
 - i. Babies should not eat any honey until they are over the age of 12 months. Honey contains botulism spores which can make babies sick when they consume honey. It is important to avoid honey in all foods (cooked and raw) until your baby is at least 12 months old.
- b. Choking hazards:
 - i. Some foods may be choking hazards when offered in certain forms but can be safely consumed otherwise. For example, whole grapes, blueberries and cherry tomatoes are a choking hazard for babies but can be safely offered by cutting them into quarters.
 - ii. Other choking hazards include foods like whole nuts and seeds which should only be offered finely ground or as smooth nut or seed butter.
 - iii. Avoid crunchy nut or seed butters as these can contain big pieces of nuts that can be a choking hazard. Choose smooth nut or seed butters like peanut butter. When offering peanut butter or other nut butters make sure to mix into foods like yogurt or yogurt or thinly spread on fruit or bread.



c. Salt

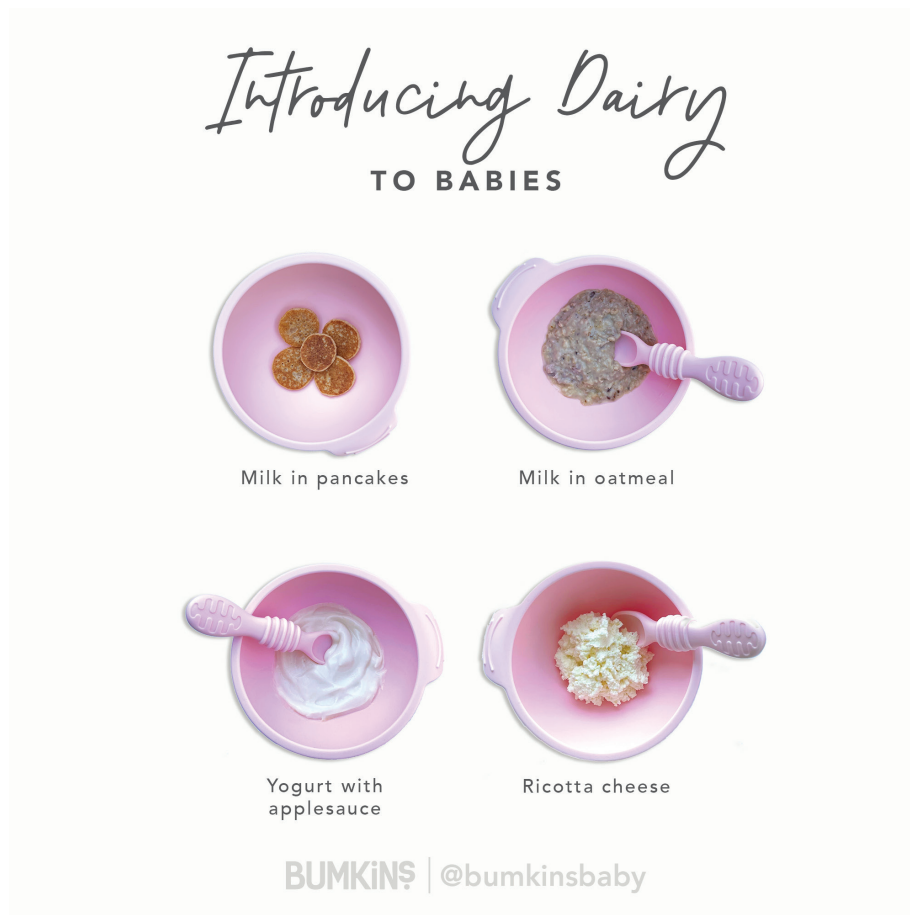
- i. Babies can safely consume a small amount of salt, but it is best to avoid salt if possible. This is because their kidneys are still developing and cannot handle large amounts of salt. Research also shows that avoiding salt when starting solids can help them accept more foods as they grow into toddlers.

d. Cow's milk to drink

- i. Babies can have cows or goats or sheeps milk in food like oatmeal, muffins, yogurt or cheese. They are recommended not to drink anything but formula or breastmilk in the first year of life.

e. Raw or undercooked meat, fish and eggs.

- i. Raw or undercooked meat or fish can cause food borne illnesses in babies since they have an underdeveloped immune system. Only offer fully cooked meat, fish and eggs to your baby when starting solids.



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