

LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

Introducing first foods or solids



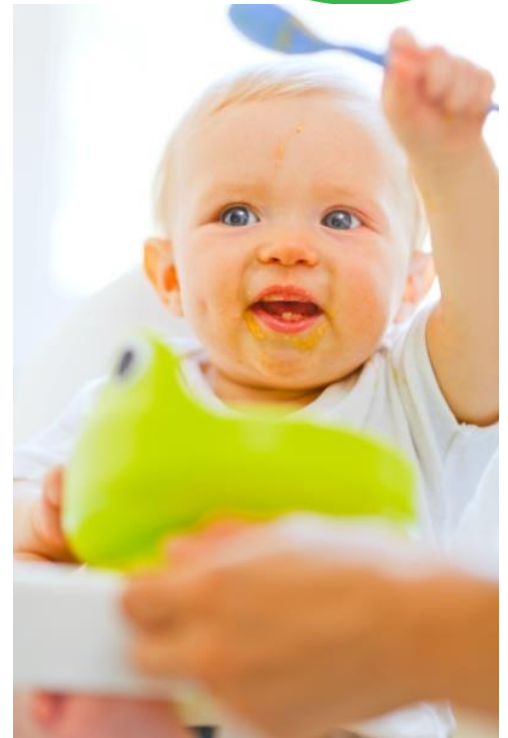
Introducing first foods or solids

Check out our video "Introduction to Solids" [click here!](#)

A common point of confusion for parents is when to introduce first foods or solids to infants. We are going to clear up some of the myths by introducing you to the latest [Infant Feeding Guidelines](#).

These national guidelines were released in 2013 and use the latest's research and use it to create clear evidence based guidelines which provide consistent advice for the public and promoting optimum nutrition to infants.

Breastmilk is the healthiest start for infants. If an infant is not breastfed infant formula provides all the nutrients, minerals and vitamins needed for healthy physical growth and development until around six months of age. After this age, in addition to breast milk or formula, infants need solid foods to meet their increased nutrient requirements. When we are talking about the introduction of first foods or solid foods there are 5 important questions:



1. When can first food or solids be started?

The current Infant Feeding Guidelines state that first foods or solids can be introduced at around 6 months of age as long as the infant shows signs of readiness. These signs include:

- Good head and neck control
- The ability to sit up almost on their own
- They are able to move food from the front to the back of the mouth and swallow
- They have a chewing action
- They are interested in food and the environment

If a child is not showing signs of readiness at or around 6 months it is important to seek medical advice.

LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

Introducing first foods or solids



2. What order should first foods be introduced?

The guidelines state that, "The introduction of solid foods at around 6 months should start with iron-containing foods, including iron-enriched infant cereals, pureed meat, poultry and fish, or cooked tofu and legumes. Vegetables, fruits, and dairy products such as full-fat yoghurt, cheese and custard can then be added".

After the introduction of iron – rich foods, solid foods can be introduced in any order.



3. How quickly can new foods be introduced?

The current guidelines suggest that foods can be introduced at a rate that suits the infant. There are no recommendations on the number of new foods that can be introduced at one time.

4. What foods and drinks are not suitable for babies?

Foods with added sugar, salt and honey as well as foods that are a choking risk including whole nuts, hard pieces of fruit and vegetables and popcorn should be avoided.

To keep tap water safe, it needs to be boiled and then cooled when giving to infants under 12 months of age. Small amounts of cow's milk can be used in the preparation of solid foods but not given as a main drink to children until 12 months of age. Beverages such as tea, coffee, soft drink, juices and cordials should not be given to infants.



LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

Introducing first foods or solids

LEAPS
eating

5. When can allergen containing foods be introduced?

Allergen containing foods including cooked egg, fish and nut pastes can be introduced at the same time as other foods – around 6 months. The current Infant Feeding Guidelines tell us this is the same for infants with a family history of allergies. However, if parents are concerned they should seek advice from a dietitian or appropriate health professional.



Healthy foods and textures

Starting first foods at around 6 months and the progression through different textures is not only important nutritionally, but also helps with the beginning of speech, teeth and jaw development. Infants learn to suck, bite, lick and chew through the actions of the mouth, lips, tongue, cheeks and jaw.

The guidelines state that:

- From 6 months of age, infants should be offered purees and then mashed or lumpy foods, progressing to minced and chopped foods
- By 8 months most infants can manage 'finger foods'
- By 12 months, infants can have nutritious choices from the foods eaten by the rest of the family and should be consuming a wide variety of foods

The guidelines also state that, continued exposure and opportunity to sample a wide variety of healthy foods help achieve adequate nutrient intakes and healthy diets in childhood. These healthy eating habits are likely to continue through to adulthood and may assist in promoting better food choices later in life.

Don't forget to check out the video if you haven't already

[- click here!](#)

Information for this article has been obtained from the Infant Feeding Guidelines. [Click here](#) to access these Guidelines.

