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BABY'S FIRST SOLID FOODS

Eating solid foods for the first time is an important experience for the baby and the parents, as the type of foods the baby eats will help him/her develop healthy eating habits later in life.

The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends starting solid foods at the age of 6 months with 1-2 tablespoons per meal, once or twice a day. Eating at this stage develops the mouth muscles while nutritional needs are been met by breast or formula milk.

WHEN IS YOUR BABY READY?

Since every child is different, the feeding age can be a little earlier or later than 6 months. Normally a baby can be fed when:

- He/ she is able to hold his/her head.
- Can sit in the baby chair.
- Is double his/her birth weight.
- Can take food from a spoon and swallow it.
- Shows interest in foods that parents are eating.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE FIRST SOLID FOODS?

Select natural foods over packed cereals.

- Soft cooked rice as it is easy to digest.
- Meat and fruits in pureed form.
- A baby's iron reserves can be low at this time, thus dark colour meats (for example, beef, chicken or turkey) that are a good source of iron can be a preferred option.
- Iron fortified baby cereal and vegetables are also a good source, but iron from meat sources is better absorbed by a baby's body as compared to vegetables.

TIPS FOR FEEDING SOLID FOODS

- Feed slowly to prevent choking.
- Do not force the child to eat while sleeping or crying.
- The feeding spoon should be small and soft with no sharp edges.
- Sit in front of the child while feeding, in order to maintain his/her posture.
- Do not feed while the child is lying down. This rule should be followed for bottle feeding as well, as this may lead to ear infections.

The information contained within is for reference and should not be used as a substitute for consulting with a Paediatrician or Registered Dietitian.

References: American Academy of paediatrics <https://www.aap.org>,
<http://www.superkidsnutrition.com/infant-nutrition-your-babys-foods/>

FOOD FEEDING SCHEDULE

- Introduce one new food over a period of 1 to 2 days. This will help in checking for any allergies or reactions.
- In case of a history of allergies in the family, fish and eggs can be delayed to 8 to 9 months and cow milk can be fed after 1 year.
- Avoid too much salt as it may lead to forming the habit of eating excessive salt from an early age that could lead to high blood pressure later in life.
- Use small amounts of olive oil in preparing meals for a healthy diet and avoid very oily foods in general.

