Introducing Your Baby to Solids and the Common Allergens

Getting ready to feed your baby solid food is an exciting time! Below, you'll find answers to common questions and concerns about introducing solids, including how and why to choose foods that children are sometimes allergic to.

How do I know when my baby is ready for solids?

- They are about 6 months of age
- They can sit up with minimum support
- They can control their head and neck
- They bring objects to their mouth
- They try to grab small objects
- They open their mouth when food is offered
- They swallow food instead of pushing it out

These are called the developmental signs of readiness.

When should I introduce solids to my baby?

Introduce your baby to solid foods, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, pureed meats, and baby cereal starting between 4-6 months or when they are developmentally ready. Some infants may show developmental signs of readiness before 6 months, but don't introduce solid foods before 4 months. Remember, your baby should still be getting most of their nutrition from breastmilk and/or formula at this age.

- It's important to introduce the common allergens along with other common baby foods. Because of this, don't wait to start solid foods past 6 months.
- *The common allergens* include peanuts, eggs, dairy such as yogurt and cheese, tree nuts, sesame, fish, shellfish, wheat, and soy. (Cow's milk should not be offered as a beverage before age 1.)

Why should I offer allergens when my baby starts solids?

Research has found that waiting to introduce these common allergens may actually increase your baby's risk of developing food allergies! So don't wait past 6 months to start offering these foods. *(See the back page for baby-friendly forms of the common allergens.)*

What if I have a family history of food allergies or other children with food allergies?

Don't hesitate to introduce these foods if other family members are allergic. Family history alone doesn't put a baby at high risk and is not a reason to check in with your healthcare team or do any testing. *(To learn about what does make a baby high risk, see the pull out box to the right.)*

What can an allergic reaction look like?

Mild reactions **- Stop feeding and watch**

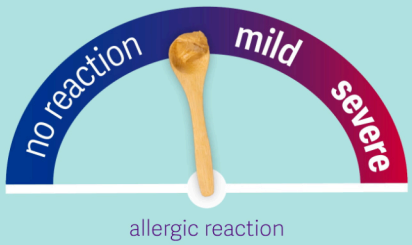
- **A mild rash or a few hives (raised, itchy spots) on the face or hands**
- **Suddenly becoming fussy**
- **Vomiting (one time only)**

More severe **- Call 911**

- **Lip swelling**
- **Repetitive vomiting and/or diarrhea**
- **Hives all over the body**
- **Face or tongue swelling**
- **Wheezing or trouble breathing**
- **Repetitive cough**
- **Change in skin color**
- **Sudden tiredness or turning limp**
- **A combination of mild or severe symptoms**

If you have any concerns about your baby's symptoms, call 911 or your healthcare team. For more examples, visit:

FAMPIT-family.org/anaphylaxis-in-babies



If your baby is allergic to eggs and/or has bad eczema:

Babies are at high risk for a peanut allergy if they have bad eczema or already have a food allergy (such as egg). High-risk babies should be introduced to allergens as early as 4 months, if they are developmentally ready. Talk with your healthcare team as early as possible about making a plan for when and how to offer baby-friendly forms of peanuts and other allergens.

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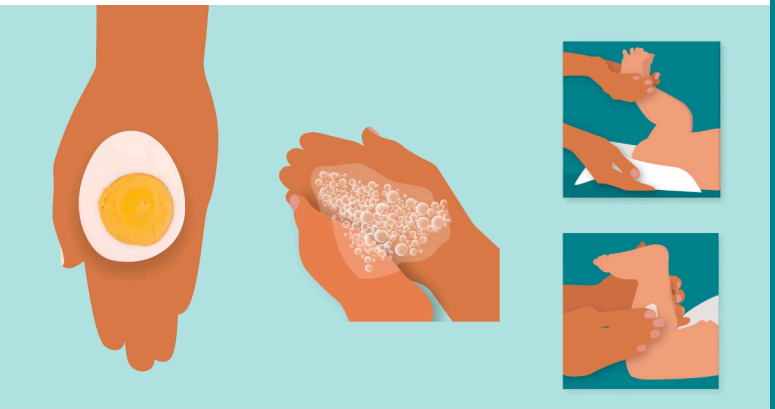
Tips for Preparing and Serving the Common Food Allergens

How do I prepare and introduce a new common food allergen?

- Always thin nut and seed butters with fruit or vegetable purees, prepared infant cereals, breast milk, or prepared infant formula. This helps prevent choking.
- Start with a very small amount, about what would fit on the tip of a spoon.
- Wait 10-15 minutes after the first couple bites to watch for a possible reaction, then slowly feed the rest.
- Once a new baby-friendly form of the food is tolerated (eaten without problem), keep offering it regularly.



Note: **Wash your hands after contact with food allergens and before handling your baby's skin. Regularly getting food allergens on the skin before baby is eating that food may increase their chance of developing a food allergy, especially if they have eczema**.

How much of the common allergens should I offer each week?

Below are tips on how much to offer your baby each week after they've successfully eaten the food for the first time (in baby-safe forms). Remember, your child will not always eat all of it. Learning to eat takes time, so be patient and follow your baby's lead!

Some examples of baby-friendly forms and how much:

- Peanuts: thinned peanut butter, 2 teaspoons about 2-3 times per week
- Tree nuts and sesame seeds: thinned nut butter and thinned tahini (sesame paste), 2 teaspoons about 2 times per week
- Eggs: fully-cooked scrambled egg, about 1/3 of an egg at least twice per week
- Fish: soft, cooked, low-mercury fish without bones or skin (ex: salmon). For more information on serving sizes and mercury visit: www.fda.gov/media/102331/download?attachment

Remember: The common food allergens have a lot of nutrients and are good for your baby. Once you know your baby can eat these foods without showing signs of an allergy, continue to offer them regularly as part of a balanced diet. *If you have questions or concerns, always reach out to your child's healthcare team.*

Simple Recipes to Get You Started

Thinned Nut/Seed Butter

- Combine 2 teaspoons smooth nut/seed butter with 2-3 teaspoons of breastmilk, prepared infant formula, or pureed fruit. Stir well until nut/seed butter is fully mixed in.

Preparing Eggs for Babies

- Scramble 1 egg until fully cooked. Let cool and mash well using a fork. Mix with breastmilk or prepared formula until smooth.

Visit FAMPIT-family.org for more!