give your baby a smiley face

Start serving egg yolks, meat, and cooked beans at 8-12 months.

a time of amazing changes

It's only been a few months 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.

Are there any new foods my baby should eat at 8-12 months?

The most important nutritional change is that now your baby is ready for protein foods. Chicken, turkey, fish, beef, beans and yogurt are all good protein choices. (Remember to introduce each new food individually and to wait at least 3 days before introducing another new food.)

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 and/or have an allergic reaction: nuts, popcorn, seeds, chips, dried fruit such as raisins, peanut butter, cheese cubes, egg whites, grapes, hot dogs, uncooked peas and other raw vegetables, and hard candy.

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 grated cheese, toast, canned fruit, beans, tofu and crackers. Remember, foods that may seem bland to you are tasty and exciting to your baby. Avoid flavored, pre-packaged, and processed foods as they tend to have added ingredients such as sugar, sodium, and/or preservatives.

Do I need to buy baby meats?

Buying baby meats is fine, but it is also OK to serve the same meat your family enjoys. However, be sure to grind or finely mince the meat to prevent choking. After a couple of months, start presenting chopped meats that your baby can feed himself.

What about eggs?

Cooked egg *yolks* are an excellent choice for babies this age. But hold the egg white until after the first birthday. Egg *white* is one of the most common causes of food allergy in infants and young children.

Are 8-12 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 at least 3 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, virtually any fruit or cooked vegetable or shredded cheese. Think of snacks as smaller servings of the healthy foods you normally serve at meals, rather than 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.

sample meals

Morning

- 4-6 tablespoons prepared infant cereal
- 2-4 tablespoons fruit

Afternoon

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

Snack

- Water in a cup
- Piece of toast or bagel

Evening

- 2-4 tablespoons vegetables
- 2-4 tablespoons strained meat
- 2-4 tablespoon 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.

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