

# Introducing Foods Early Helps Prevent Food Allergy



**Babies who start eating a variety of solid foods around 4 to 6 months old may reduce their risk of developing a food allergy in half.**

## When Do I Start Feeding Solid Foods to My Baby?

Make sure your child is ready to eat solid foods. Your baby should be able to sit and hold their head up without help, be interested in food, and not thrust the food out of their mouth with their tongue.

Start feeding your baby solid foods around 4 to 6 months old. Give them a variety of foods, including foods that are common food allergens. This helps teach their immune system to tolerate foods.

Don't purposely avoid or delay feeding foods to your baby. Make sure your child is healthy (no fever, cold, vomiting, or diarrhea). Give the food when you can watch your child for at least 2 hours after feeding.

## Is My Baby At Risk of Developing Food Allergy?

Babies with certain conditions and a family history of allergies are more likely to develop food allergies.

- Severe eczema – highest risk
- Already have a food allergy – second highest risk
- Mild to moderate eczema – some risk
- Family history of allergies – some risk
- General population without other risk factors mentioned – lowest risk

## How Do I Introduce Foods to My Baby?

1

Start with single foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and infant cereal. Give a single food for a few days to make sure there are no allergic reactions, then move on to add the next food, and so forth. Once they can tolerate these foods (showing your baby can handle solid food taste and texture), add in common food allergens.

2

Continue to feed the food to your baby regularly if they don't have an allergic reaction to it. Aim for about 2 teaspoons of the food 2 or more times a week for at least 3 months.



### Most Common Food Allergens

### Examples of Foods to Feed Your Baby

Milk

Milk, formula, cheese, plain yogurt, cottage cheese

Eggs

Fully cooked scrambled egg, finely chopped hardboiled egg (no runny egg yolk)

Peanuts

Thinned peanut butter, peanut puffs, powder

Tree nuts

Thinned nut butter (almond, cashew, pecan)

Soy

Tofu, smashed edamame

Wheat

Well-cooked pasta, plain cream of wheat cereal, toast

Fish

Chopped, fully cooked cod, bass, or flounder

Crustacean shellfish

Finely chopped, fully cooked shrimp, crab, or lobster

Sesame

Sesame seed butter, hummus, tahini



## Sample Recipes



### Pureed or mashed hard-boiled egg

- Puree or mash hard-boiled egg until smooth. Mix with a small amount of breast milk or formula for a creamier consistency.

### Omelet strips

- Crack an egg into a bowl and whisk until fluffy. Cook in a nonstick pan for 1 minute. Flip and cook for 1 more minute. Cut into strips or bite-sized pieces.



### Thinned smooth peanut butter

- Measure 2 teaspoons of peanut butter and slowly add 2-3 teaspoons hot water.
- Stir until dissolved and well blended. Let cool.
- Increase water amount if necessary. Or, add to their regular infant cereal to achieve consistency comfortable for the baby.

### Peanut flour and peanut butter powder

- Measure 2 teaspoons of either product (both interchangeable).
- Add 2 tablespoons of tolerated fruit or vegetable puree to flour or powder.
- Volume of puree can be adjusted to achieve desired consistency.

### Peanut containing puffs or sticks (Bamba)

- 21 sticks = about 2 g of peanut protein
- Infants less than 7 months of age: soften with 4-6 teaspoons of water.
- Older infants can eat as is but you can also soften, if desired.



### Wheat porridge

- In a small sauce pan, boil 1 ¼ cups of water or breast milk. Add 3 tablespoons of cream of wheat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low and cook according to the recommended time on the box. Cool before serving.

There is no benefit to delaying introduction of foods. But there is a benefit to introducing foods early. The most benefit has been shown with adding peanut and egg into the diet in the first year of life. The other foods can be safely introduced in the first year of life, as your baby tolerates, but do not need to be rushed just to finish this list by the time they turn 1. The aim is to feed these foods regularly, once introduced. However, you should not worry if your baby did not eat a particular amount or eat these foods a certain number of times per week. **Just try your best.**

## What Do I Do If My Baby Has An Allergic Reaction?

Even if you introduce foods early to your baby, they may still develop food allergies. If your child has any symptoms of an allergic reaction, stop feeding the food and call your child's doctor.

**If your child has any of these symptoms after eating food, they may be having a serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.**

- Trouble breathing, belly breathing
- Widespread hives or rash
- Face, lip, or tongue swelling
- Repeated coughing
- Wheezing, hoarse voice/cry
- Vomiting, diarrhea
- Change in skin color (pale, red, gray, purple, or blue)
- Personality changes or sudden tiredness



Follow up with your child's doctor within 24 hours after a severe allergic reaction.

Severe allergic reactions can progress quickly. Epinephrine is safe and stops the serious symptoms of allergic reactions. If your child is diagnosed with a food allergy, they will be prescribed epinephrine for you to have on hand in case of future allergic reactions.



Through our online communities, you can connect with others and stay up to date on news and research. Join our community to follow our blog for the latest new food finds and allergy-friendly recipes at: [kidswithfoodallergies.org/join](https://kidswithfoodallergies.org/join)