

Feeding Your Baby

By Natalie Pickering – Naturopath

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Navigating the path through introducing food to your baby can be a confusing, difficult journey. There is a lot of conflicting nutritional advice about when and which foods should be introduced when weaning babies onto solid food.

It's important to understand why such careful consideration is necessary at this stage. One of the main reasons for not weaning on to solids too quickly is that it is not until 5-6 months that most babies can manage the action of sucking and chewing simultaneously, by this age most babies are also capable of holding food in their mouths and swallowing.

A second reason to tread carefully is the fact that an infant's kidneys and digestive system are not mature enough to cope with some of the protein structures and other nutrients in solid food until 5 ½ to 6 months. If introduced too early some foods can cause intolerance reactions like runny nose, glue ear, diarrhoea or constipation, skin rashes (especially on bottom, arms or legs), restlessness and poor sleep habits. Some foods may cause classic allergy symptoms such as asthma and eczema. For this reason foods such as wheat, dairy, soy, eggs, nuts, seafood, strawberries and citrus fruit are often better left until 10-12 months, depending on family history.

The ideal foods to begin with are finely pureed low salicylate vegetables and fruits and brown rice. It's best to choose fresh, organic foods, if unavailable remove skins to reduce pesticides and other chemicals. Each food should be given separately for 3-5 days before starting the next food, carefully watching for any signs of reaction or intolerance. After establishing a solid starting point, gradually increase the range of fruits and vegetables and the coarseness of the blend.

Consider addition of low allergy, nutrient rich grains such as quinoa, millet and amaranth from 7-8 months, then grains containing gluten such as oats, rye, spelt and barley from 9 months, leaving wheat until 12 months. Protein is vital to a baby's healthy development, as babies grow the protein in milk is no longer adequate to their needs. From 8-9 months, the addition of easily digestible proteins foods such as lentils, chicken, fish, and sheep's, cow's or soy yoghurt. Then from 11-12 months begin adding beef, lamb and turkey as well as beans, cheeses, nuts, seeds and soy products.

Taking the time to introduce solids carefully encourages the smoothest transition from a fully breast or bottle fed infant to a well nourished, happy baby with a strong, balanced immune function, optimal brain and nerve development and healthy digestive habits. The above is only intended as a starting point, consult your naturopath for a thorough plan for introducing food to your baby.

About Natalie Pickering

Natalie studied at Murdoch University before graduating from the Perth Academy of Natural Therapies with a Diploma of Applied Science in Natural Therapy and received the award for "Best in Clinical Practice."

Natalie has a special interest in preconceptual planning, suboptimal fertility and children's health issues.

As a mother, as well as in her capacity as a Naturopath, Natalie is supportive of **Wholesome Baby**.

Natalie's professional naturopath advice can be sought by making a booking at the Perth Natural Medical Clinic on (08) 9328 9233. www.pnmc.com.au