



Starting Solids

Introducing food to your mountain baby may seem overwhelming, but with some simple steps, it can be an easy and exciting time! We are here every step of this journey to help you fuel your mountain kid to grow healthy and strong.

When to Start



Signs that your baby is ready to introduce solids into their diet typically develop around 4–6 months of age and include:

- Sitting up with minimal support, displaying full head and neck control
- Brings toys or other objects to their mouth
- Shows interest in foods, watches you eat or mouths for food

Foods to Focus On

- Nutrient dense
- Low in heavy metals
- Easy to self feed
- Advance flavor/texture/oral motor skill
- Low risk for aspiration

Foods to Avoid

- High risk for food borne illness
- High choking risk: small, hard, round, slippery
 - Needs modification
 - ex. blueberry– mashed or quartered
- Highly processed
- High level of added salt /sugar

Why

Up until this time, your baby has mastered the suck–swallow skill that they learned from day one. Now they need to learn to properly chew & safely swallow their food. Like any other learned skill, this takes repeated practice & exposure. They are practicing these skills over the next few months in preparation for when solids become the primary source of nutrition around 1 year of age.

Starting solids during this age helps to:

- Introduce new & varied nutrients to support growth & development
- Establish feeding habits that prevent picky eating
- Building their flavor palate
- Build oral motor skills for a variety of textures

Volume

Start by offering 1 meal per day at varied times from day to day. Consider offering breastmilk or formula 30 minutes before a meal to make sure baby is content & happy when food is offered. The frequency of solids will slowly increase to 3 meals per day + snacks around 12 months. Don't be concerned about the volume of food right now as breastmilk or formula is still their primary source of nutrition.



Allergen Foods

Current research best supports the practice of introducing allergen foods to infants before a year, with multiple exposures. This equates to 1–2 tsp peanut butter or egg per week.

Food allergies typically do not present with a severe anaphylaxis response with first exposure. Symptoms will typically start with hives and progress with additional exposures. If you have concerns with introducing high allergen foods given a family or medical history, please reach out to your provider for individualized care.

Safe Space

Choking is a common concern with parents when starting solids. Like any other new skill in life, there is some risk with learning. However, there are factors within our control to reduce this risk.

Factors to Reduce Choking Risk:

- Ensuring developmental readiness
- Proper eating environment
 - supervision
 - appropriate foot and back support
 - no physical activity or crying/startling etc.
- Age-appropriate food forms
 - Reference Solid Starts Food Database



Cow's Milk Introduction

Current recommendations are to wait until 1 year of age to introduce cow's milk as it is not a complete nutritional source like breast milk or formula and can displace baby nutrients. When we do start introducing milk we want to think of it as a **drink** and **not a meal**. It is meant to be offered only at meal times and not in a bottle. In excess, cow's milk can cause nutritional deficiencies. If your child will not take milk, don't worry. You should continue to offer exposures, but it is also not necessary for all children to drink milk as they can get these nutrients from other dairy sources.

- Servings of dairy
 - 1 cup milk or yogurt = 1 serving
 - 1–1.5 oz cheese = 1 serving
 - (1 yr old ~ 2 servings per day)
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Positive Meal Structure

It is important to establish consistent family meal structures from the beginning, so that when we enter toddlerhood, we are able to hold these boundaries and routines.

Give your baby plenty of time to eat, without forcing food on your baby. Humans are born with an internal ability to self-regulate how much food we eat. We don't want to disrupt this. Try to make eating a positive family-centered experience where they are able to explore new textures and flavors. As a parent, you choose when and what food is being served and the child decides if and how much they want to eat.

