

What Shall I Feed my Baby?

By Barbara O'Neill

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Breast is best – God designed the woman's anatomy with special apparatus for the function of nourishing her baby. Situated in the perfect area so she can hold and snuggle her little one whilst he is feeding, and a mother's breasts contain the perfect amount of nutrition for every stage of baby's development. The nutrient content of mother's milk will change according to baby's needs, even from week to week. Every mother's milk is perfect for her baby. There is no equal. As baby sucks, hormones are released into the mother's blood stream that increases the mothering instincts, thus helping her to be a more attentive mother.

It is best for baby to be trained into habits of regularity at an early age. There should be definite periods of feeding and rest. The mother needs to use discretion to read her baby's needs. Some babies go well on three-hour feeding, some on four-hour feeding. Mother's milk is digested much quicker than formula or other milks. Thus some babies need three-hour feeding.

Alternatives

If unforeseen circumstances arise and mother is not able to feed her baby, you can use as a substitute the formulas listed below. Milk formula made from powdered milk is 'dead' milk. Baby needs live milk, as breast milk is live, being full of enzymes. Here are some 'live' alternative milk formulas:

Almond Date Milk

1 cup almonds

2 soaked dates

1 litre water

Blend very well and strain through a fine sieve.

Banana Milk

Very ripe bananas

½ teaspoon slippery elm powder

1 litre water

Blend well.

Juice

70% carrot juice

20% apple juice

10% celery juice

The ratio for baby is 3 parts juice, 1 part water.

Goat's Milk

Milk from a healthy goat

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When is My Baby Ready to Eat?

There are three requirements necessary to ensure baby is ready for solid food. When all the following signposts are present, baby is ready for food. The age that these requirements occur can differ largely with each baby:

When baby can sit up all by himself

- Baby usually sits well by about 7 ½ months

When baby can pick up and put food in his mouth

- Most babies begin to put things in their mouths at about the age of five months. This is their way of exploring, feeling and tasting things. By 7 ½ to 8 months babies are quite proficient at putting things in their mouths – even their big toes!

When baby has teeth with which to masticate the food

- Baby teeth begin to erupt at about six months of age, and one pair appears at about each month hereafter until all twenty are present. The incisors, which are closest to the midline, appear first, four on the upper gums and four on the lower gums. These eight teeth are usually all through by about eleven months of age. The incisors are chisel-shaped and designed to cut into food. So at this age the best foods are fruits and vegetables. Raw is best as raw food is live food and live food digests very easily as it is full of enzymes. It is vital that you begin with small tastes of one fruit at a time and that the fruit is very ripe. Another important point is to always give baby his food after his milk.

8 to 14 Months Old

Suggested fruits:

- Ripe bananas (black spots on the skin are a good sign), pear, grated apple, paw paw and avocado.
- Pieces of apple or pear can be placed in a little net bag or the cut off foot of a stocking. Then tie the end. Baby will happily suck on this for a long time and no lumps can come through the little holes. Raw is best.

These are very gentle fruits, after a few weeks other fruits can be introduced, again stressing they be very ripe. Seasonal fruits are best as they are the freshest. Organic food has a much higher nutrient value without the danger of insecticides. Dried fruits are also a good option for baby to chew on, especially a very dry prune or date. Try dried banana.

After baby has been on fruits a couple of months, some veggies can be introduced.

Suggested vegetables:

- Celery sticks and most raw veggies.
- Corn cobs with the corn taken off (baby loves this!)

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- Lightly steamed pieces of carrot, broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini and cabbage. If lightly steamed, baby can pick them up and nibble on them. Baby will enjoy the different colours, tastes and textures. One baby I know loved all the 'green foods'.

Also at this time a little mashed sweet potato or butternut pumpkin is good as they are soft and moist and need nothing added.

As the only teeth baby has at this stage are incisors, no starch should be given. Ptyalin, which is the salivary amylase that initiates the breakdown of starch, is not present in the mouth. This enzyme is not produced until the eruptions of the first molars. Baby can eat zwieback though. Zwieback twice baked bread. The bread is cut into finger sized pieces and laid in a warm oven 100 C for 1 ½ hours. This process converts all the starch in the bread to grape sugar. This is the same process that happens when a green banana becomes a ripe banana. Grape sugar is found in ripe fruit and is digested easily and quickly.

If baby has a large appetite and you feel you would like a little more than above, a little ground almond, sunflower seeds, linseed or pumpkin seeds can be added to mashed banana. Another alternative is to add 1 teaspoon slippery elm powder to a mashed banana. Slippery elm is the powdered bark of the slippery elm tree. It is very nutritious and soothing to the digestive tract.

14 Months and Onwards

It is around the age of 14 to 18 months that the digestive tract begins to mature and baby can cope with complex carbohydrates. The signpost is when the first molars appear. These have four cusps and are used to crush and grind food. The canines or eyeteeth erupt at about eighteen to twenty months. They are situated between the incisors and the first molars. The canines are used to tear and shred the food.

When the molars appear, ptyalin, the amylase in saliva, which breaks down starch, is now produced. At this stage potatoes, bread and cereals can be introduced. It is important that all grains be thoroughly cooked, and also the legumes should be soaked and well cooked. It is best at this stage to slowly introduce these foods, always leaning more to the fruits and vegetables.

By 18 to 24 months baby is usually eating three meals a day and is down to only a couple of milk feeds. If baby is weaned from the breast he can be given a fresh juice once or twice a day. Carrot, apple and celery are best. This mix contains all the necessary nutrients to sustain life. This is often called vegetarian's milk.

Weaning off the breast depends a lot on mother, baby and circumstances. One of my babies seemed 'desperate' for food at nine months even though she was quite 'round'. Another of my babies ate hardly a thing till he was sixteen months and he too was well padded. One baby weaned herself at one year whilst another weaned himself at three years.

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Your baby is the best book to read; he will tell you his needs, but the mother must meet those needs with discretion and within the guidelines presented above. All the babies I have reared and known to be reared according to these principles have been happy babies and grown (and are growing) to be strong, bright healthy adults.