

## Introducing Solid Foods at 6 months

It is such an exciting time to start feeding your baby solid food, but it can also be a very frustrating and stressful time for parents to navigate. Sometimes, your baby refuses to eat certain foods, or meals that you have worked so hard to prepare for them. Parents may worry about whether their baby is getting sufficient nutrition in order to meet all of their developmental milestones. As a parent, you always want the best for your baby.

Alberta Health Services has a great resource (you can find the link at the end of this post), that helps parents with this exciting time of introducing solid foods to their baby. It speaks about routine and readiness and which foods to try first.

First, you need to see if your baby is ready to begin eating solid food. Different babies have their own different development paces. Babies show these signs that they are ready for solid food: Sits up with little help; has good head and neck control (so he can swallow the food properly); opens his mouth when food is offered; turns head away when he is full.

There are some common facts about children's eating habits which the parents should be aware of before beginning to introduce solid food (Nurturing Parenting curriculum):

1. Read your baby's cues. Your baby does know how much she wants to eat. If babies are hungry, they will want more; a baby turns their head away is saying "I am full". You know your child the best and follow his or her cues. You may guess wrongly sometimes, but try to understand and follow your child's cues.
2. Feeding is one of the earliest experiences babies have. You want your baby have a good feeling about eating his or her solid food, so you are helping your baby feel good about herself and the world. Remember, all the good feelings about themselves come from the good interactions with the parents. Good experiences boost good brain development. Do not force your baby to eat! Remember you do not feel good when you are forced to do something, same as your lovely baby.
3. There are no particularly predictable patterns of eating food. What might look good to eat today won't look good tomorrow; what your baby likes eating today might not be what he likes tomorrow.
4. Teething often takes away babies' appetites.
5. As your children become more mobile, they may lose interest in eating because they feel so excited and busy in exploring the world. It is your responsibility to fit feeding routine into his busy schedule.

There are some good tips in establishing a nurturing feeding time routine (Nurturing Parenting curriculum): Always remember, a happy brain learns better and eats better!

1. Provide your child with a comfortable eating environment. Young babies can be put in infant seats and older children can be in high chairs securely.

2. Allow your child the opportunity to reject food. You may need to try to feed your baby same kind of food many times until he likes it (Don't force to feed him but continues to offer same food for many times).
3. Reinforce your baby's personal choices in eating. Give your baby one new food at a time and start with small amounts.
4. Encourage your child to begin to feed himself around 9 to 10 months. Your child will feel so empowered to be able to feed himself.
5. Praise your child for feeding himself, sitting patiently waiting for food, using a fork or spoon. Remember, praise the behaviour you want so you can enforce the desired behaviours.

Remember to have fun and enjoy this stage, and to give yourself patience when it takes a while to feed your baby. This is helping them to grow and develop, keep up the great work!

AHS Solid Food Feeding guideline <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-starting-solid-foods-around-6-months.pdf>

