

*Dawn Whittaker*

EXPERIENCED PARENTING COACH

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# SOLIDS & ROUTINE FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS



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## About Dawn

Dawn has over 25 years of experience in the childcare industry, coaching and collaborating with families of all backgrounds (even some celebrities and professional athletes too!). As a former nanny, parenting coach and mother of three, she has a bird's eye view of the type of challenges that parents face on a daily basis and has winning strategies on how to effectively handle them. She has a wide range of experience in all child-rearing related issues. - ranging from ages 0 to 5.

As a mother of a teen, tweens and one in between she understands the demands of modern parenthood and can help you strike the right balance for your family.



## My Philosophy

Dawn is extremely down to earth, approachable and has (probably) heard it all. Her clients choose her for her honest approach to parenthood all the while maintaining a safe and secure environment for open dialogue.

She is known for counseling her clients with a real talk approach and her personal philosophy is to raise her children with open, honest and kind communication.

Regardless of your background, parenting experience or marital status Dawn believes parenting doesn't have to be so hard. If you need an additional perspective in a non-judgemental setting - Dawn is a good fit for you!

## As Seen On



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Today's Parent

# What We Will Cover

There's a lot of information in this eBook. By reading it, you can expect to:

1. Recognize common signs that indicate a baby is ready for solids
2. Feel confident that you're making informed decisions when it comes to your baby's food intake and daily routine
3. Know what to expect with introducing solids
4. Know what and how to introduce solids to your little one
5. Learn about the optimal routine for each age group, helping your little one eat and sleep
6. Be able to adjust your child's routine and schedule as they develop
7. Feel confident in dealing with common issues like constipation

# Before We Begin

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Please note that much of this publication is based on personal experience. Every reasonable attempt to achieve complete accuracy of the content in this guide has been taken. The author assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions. Also, you should use this information as you see fit. If your particular situation is not exactly suited to the examples illustrated here you should adjust your use of the information and recommendations accordingly or as suggested by your family doctor or pediatrician.

# Welcome!

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This eBook is designed for parents of children aged four months to three years. It takes two decades of research and practice, and distills it into easy-to-follow daily sleeping and eating routines by age. My goal with this guide is for you to gain confidence as your parenting journey evolves.

Here's what you may or may not already know about routines for eating and sleeping:

1. Routine is very important for children. It helps to set their body clocks and keep their blood sugar levels stable throughout the day.
2. Sleep and food are two basic requirements for your child. If you can keep these two things balanced right, you'll have a happy baby.
3. Every few years, trends for how and when to introduce solids seem to change. Whether you want to follow the flavour of the day is up to you. Most of these methods have been around for generations. Choose the style that works for you and have confidence in your choice. Success will come not from the style you choose, but from the foundation you lay: eating together as a family and modeling the behavior you want to see.

As your knowledge and experience with feeding your children grows, so too will your confidence. And with that, you can do something incredible for your child: have fun with food!

You are embarking on a great adventure. So enjoy watching your child discover new flavours, textures and colours.

Have a washcloth and your confidence with you at all times!

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EXPERIENCED PARENTING COACH

## Getting Started



When first introducing solid foods, remember that breast milk or formula will initially continue to be your child's primary source of nutrition. Solids, in any form, should be introduced gently and increased slowly to prevent overwhelming the gut. This will prepare your baby for breakfast, lunch and dinner at a later date.

Here are some starting tips and things you should know before starting your adventure in solids:

## Dawn's Solids "Do" List

- Offer breast milk or formula first thing in the morning when your baby wakes up (anything after 6:00am is considered daytime).  
If you jump right in and do breakfast first then your baby may decrease their milk intake too quickly.

- Get out the green beans. Work with vegetables first! If you give your baby fruits only, you may train their palate to prefer sweet foods. Vegetables, meat, then fruits is a good order to follow. Grains are also fine at any time.

- Try to introduce foods when your child is hungry but not to the point that they are frantic and starving.

- Initially offer one new food every third day and do so at lunchtime; if, after 24 hours they have not shown any reaction, you can increase the amount and rotate this food to dinnertime. If they do show a reaction to it, avoid it for a month or two and then try again.

- Offer foods that are well liked with a new food to teach variety; don't get stuck offering the same thing over and over, meats often do well paired with root vegetables.

## Dawn's Solids "Do Not" List

- Get frustrated if your little one refuses food for the first few times it is offered. They may not be quite ready and the more you push the more they will refuse, making it a negative experience
- Try to force food in (despite anyone telling you to do what it takes)
- Feed an overtired baby new foods, and, in some cases, any food
- Spoon-feed a crying baby; this can be a choking hazard
- Add rice cereal to your baby's bottle. Not only is this not the right way to serve cereal, your baby may not make the connection that food is supposed to be eaten off a spoon, sitting up and the extra calories in the bottle can also effect the eating pattern overall and curb their appetite at a regular eating time.

## What To Expect

When you first start the solids adventure, your baby may be more vocal transitioning between sleep cycles over night. This is due to their stomachs working hard to digest new foods. In some cases they may be gassy or have a stomach ache. It's a myth that stuffing your baby with food will make them sleep better, a baby too full will sleep worse.

You should also expect:

- To get messy! Have washcloths ready.
- Constipation. A lot of babies will get constipated when they are first given solids especially if foods are iron heavy. Colon massage, warm water either on a spoon or in a bottle and prunes/prune juice will help. To read more about dealing with constipation, please refer to our "Challenges with Solids" section.
- Some signs from your baby. If the food is well-received, then signs that your little one is full may include: swatting the spoon, clamping their mouth closed or spitting food back out at you.

# 6

## Signs Your Baby May Be Ready To Start Solids

Over the past few decades, the timeline of when to introduce solids has varied from 3 to 6 months. These days, the World Health Organization recommends introducing solids, or what they call “complimentary feeding” at around six months.

In certain cases, such as babies with reflux, solids are introduced earlier. For this reason we have included a daily routine for a 4-6 month-old. There is no rush. If you choose to start earlier or later than 6 months, follow the same principles that are laid out but use the routine that matches your child’s age.

At whichever age you introduce solids, it is an exciting milestone for you and your baby! Enjoy watching them learn and experiment with new taste, textures and colours.

Here are 6 signs your little one might be ready for this new adventure!

1

Your baby is at least 4 months,

2

Your baby can hold their head up steadily.

3

Your baby can sit upright with support.



4

Your baby shows signs of curiosity when they see you eating.

5

Your baby drinks at least 40 fluid ounces of milk daily or breastfeeds several times daily.



6

Your baby can open their mouths and turn their head away when you present them with food on a spoon.

# Introducing Solids

## THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

Perhaps you've been dreaming of this moment since you held your baby for the first time. Your baby's first taste of solids can be an exciting moment. It can also be something new parents dread. With a little bit of information and planning, introducing solids can be a positive experience for both baby and parent!

Here's what we recommend for the first few weeks of your adventure with solids:

### WEEK ONE

Your focus this week is on testing some foods at the 11am window.

**DAYS 1-3:** Reserve 2 oz of milk from the 10:30 am feed, and mix with one half teaspoon of a selected food. Feed this at 11:00 am (lunch). Watch for allergic reactions.

**DAYS 4-7:** Introduce a new food, if there were no reactions with the previous food. Once two foods are both safe, you can mix them together to create a new flavour for your baby.

### WEEK TWO AND THREE

During these two weeks, you'll begin offering safe foods at dinner (the 5:00 pm window).

**DAYS 8-21:** offer dinner food at 5:00 pm with a 'safe' food. Continue adding a new food at lunch every 3 days, watching for reactions. If it's safe, it can be a dinner option and can be mixed with other safe foods.

### WEEK FOUR

Starting this week, you'll offer your baby breakfast, at the 8:00 am window.

Add breakfast at 8:00 am with safe foods.

**DAYS 22+:** Once breakfast is well-established, begin to decrease the 10:30 am milk feed by an ounce every few days or by a few minutes every few days if breastfeeding.

Once your baby is regularly eating three meals a day (and if baby is at least six months), you can phase out the dreamfeed if you've been offering it.



# 4

## Steps To Safely Introduce A New Food

1

At the 11:00 am window, introduce a new food.

2

Offer only a half teaspoon to a full teaspoon.

3

Watch for reactions (for example, a rash).

4

No reaction after THREE DAYS of trying this food? You can now consider this food safe!



### COMMON FIRST FOODS TO TRY

Common first foods include:



Carrots



Chicken/  
Turkey



Rice Cereal Made With  
Breast Milk or Formula



Peas



Beef



Oat Cereal Made With  
Breast Milk or Formula



Green/  
Wax Beans



Apples/  
Pears



Any of the Stage 1  
Baby Food Jars Sold  
At Markets/Grocery  
Stores



Sweet Potato/  
Potato



Bananas

If your baby has an orange nose, palms of hands or soles of feet it may be the result of large quantities of beta-carotene in their diet (found in orange coloured fruits and vegetables). Don't panic; you are doing a good job of giving them healthy and nutritious foods! The colouring will disappear with the reduction of beta-carotene rich foods. It can also occur in breast milk (particularly in vegetarians) so even if your baby isn't directly consuming these foods, they are contributing as well.

See our "Challenges with Solids" section for foods to avoid during the first year.

# The dreamfeed

## OVERVIEW

The dreamfeed is a parent-initiated feed, commonly done while baby is sleeping (although some babies will wake before or during the feed. This feed:

- Can be a breast or bottle feed
- Is offered during a phase of deep sleep
- Is commonly offered between 3 and 6 months of age, and can be offered up to 9 months of age
- Is best for babies who do not depend on a soother or rocking to get to sleep

## GETTING STARTED

Check with your doctor or pediatrician to make sure your baby's weight gain can support longer stretches of night sleep. A common guideline is that baby must be at least 12 weeks and weigh at least 12 pounds.

At some point between 10:00pm and 11:00pm, pick your baby up and offer milk from the breast or bottle, as you normally would. After the feed, return baby to the crib or bassinet. Some things to keep in mind:

1. Many babies will remain asleep during this feed. Others will wake up in anticipation of the feed or during it and will return to sleep easily once finished.
2. It often takes a few tries to get baby to take the full offering of milk at this time. Be persistent and patient!
3. If you're bottle feeding, get the right nipple for baby's stage. It often takes trying a few bottle nipples to get the dreamfeed going smoothly.
4. Many Dads enjoy offering the dreamfeed, both for bonding and for getting Mom a head start on the night's sleep! If baby is breastfed, try expressing milk for a bottle before you go to bed.
5. Any night wakings after a dreamfeed are generally not due to hunger.

## PHASING OUT THE DREAMFEED

Phase out the dreamfeed at some point between 6 and 8 months. If your baby's weight gain or milk intake is a concern, wait until 9 months.

Why not just keep the dreamfeed forever?

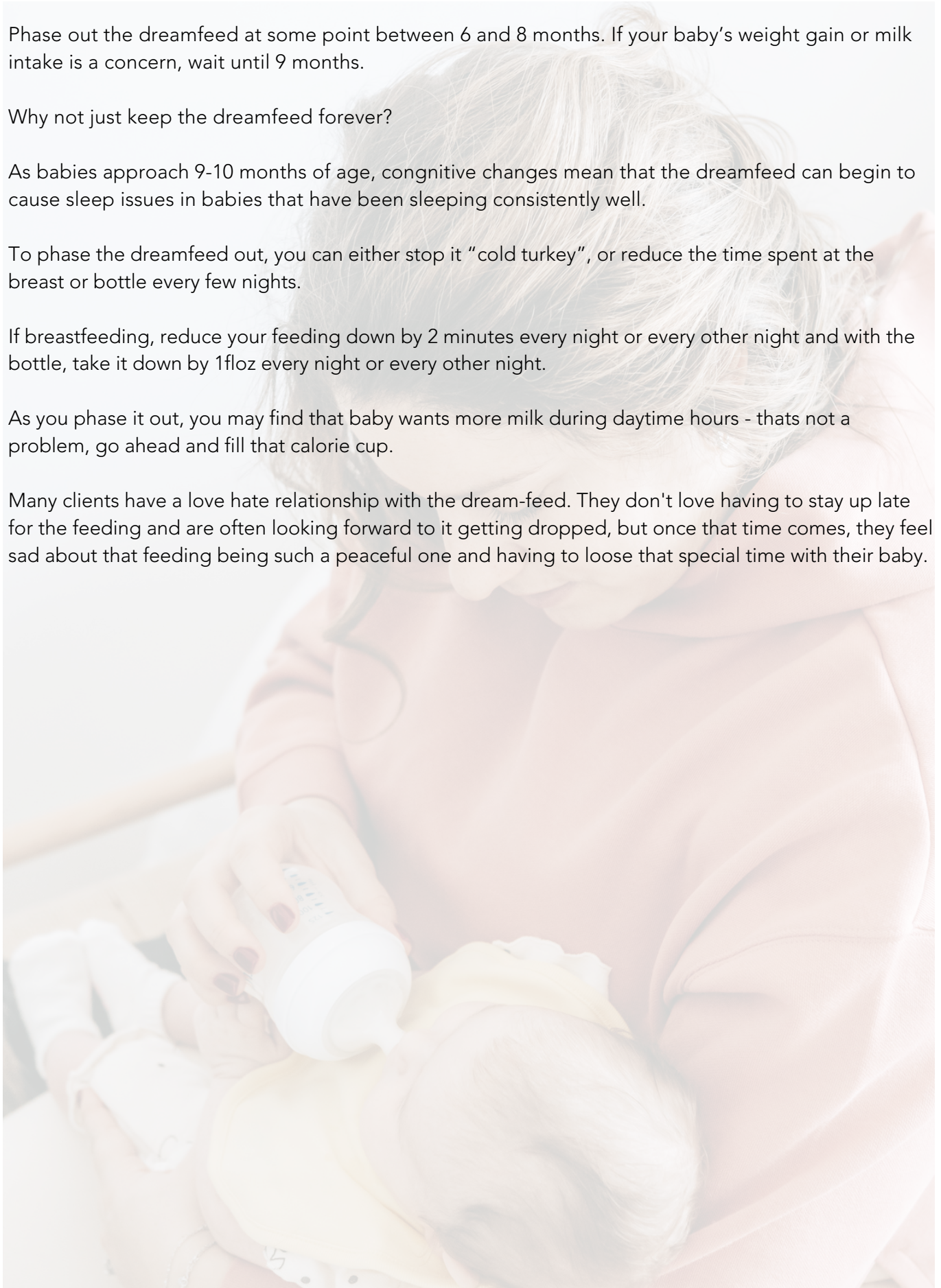
As babies approach 9-10 months of age, cognitive changes mean that the dreamfeed can begin to cause sleep issues in babies that have been sleeping consistently well.

To phase the dreamfeed out, you can either stop it "cold turkey", or reduce the time spent at the breast or bottle every few nights.

If breastfeeding, reduce your feeding down by 2 minutes every night or every other night and with the bottle, take it down by 1floz every night or every other night.

As you phase it out, you may find that baby wants more milk during daytime hours - that's not a problem, go ahead and fill that calorie cup.

Many clients have a love hate relationship with the dream-feed. They don't love having to stay up late for the feeding and are often looking forward to it getting dropped, but once that time comes, they feel sad about that feeding being such a peaceful one and having to lose that special time with their baby.



# Daily Routines

in this section, we'll go into detail on optimal routines for several age groups:

[4-6 months](#) | [6-9 months](#) | [9-12 months](#) | [12-18 months](#) | [18 months to 3 years](#)

As you probably know by now, each baby is unique! The ages used are guidelines designed to help you as your baby grows and develops. A few things to keep in mind as you explore this section:

## TIMING IS A GUIDELINE

These daily feeding routines are based on a loose twelve-hour cycle, between 7am and 7pm. While we use 7am as the start of each day's routine, we consider anything after 6am daytime. So, if your baby wakes before 6am, you're treating this as a night waking and not typically offering any milk or food. If your baby wakes after 6am, this is when you will begin your day, moving each subsequent activity earlier to correspond.

## DAWN'S TIP

Always begin your baby's day by creating a daytime environment.

Turn your lights on if it is dark out to help your little one know it's time to begin the day.

## WHEN YOU START IS UP TO YOU

Many parents begin solids at 6 months, so our first routine is a typical one for a baby of this age. However, it will work for a baby as young as 4 months, if you've opted to begin solids earlier than 6 months.

If you've chosen to start solids later than 6 months, go to the section that corresponds to your child's age. While we've included multiple meals and snacks in these routines, you'll want to begin the same way as you would with a younger baby: testing one food at a time in the lunch window.

## OUNCES ARE A GUIDELINE

In these routines, we refer to how many ounces of milk to offer. These are guidelines only, and generally refer to bottle-fed babies.

## AWAKE TIMES AND NAPS SHIFT GRADUALLY

Generally, as babies get older, their time between naps (awake time) gets longer. But it doesn't do this overnight! As your baby gets older and you switch from one routine to the next, shift awake times and naps gradually, not abruptly.

## 4-6 MONTHS

If you're beginning solids close to 6 months or earlier, this is a great routine to start with. We've also provided a routine for babies 6-9 months of age. Because each baby is an individual, you may find that one routine works better than the other for your 6 month-old.

TIME	ACTIVITY	NOTES
7:30 am	Wake & milk feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding, in a daytime environment
8:30 am	Nap #1	This nap should come one and a half to two hours after waking
10:30 am	Milk Feed	6 out of 8 oz if bottle feeding. Reserve 2 oz for mixing with solids. This milk feed should be reduced gradually as solids are introduced. If bottle feeding, reduce the amount by 1 oz every four to five days. If breast feeding, reduce the amount of time baby stays at the breast.
11:00 am	Solids (Lunch)	Use the remaining 2 fl oz of milk to mix with rice cereal or oats. This is the time to introduce new foods for the first time as it provides the opportunity to check a baby's skin and behaviour for potential reactions to the food. Reminder: don't introduce new foods in the evening. If you baby has an allergic reaction you may not notice it before they go to bed and it could disrupt their sleep. Timing for lunch will gradually shift as until it is closer to 11:30 am.
12:30 pm	Nap #2	This nap should be 1.5-2 hours long and should come 2.5 hours from waking from their first nap.
2:30 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
4:30 pm	Nap #3	This is a shorter nap and can be up to an hour. Baby needs to be up by 5:00 pm at the latest for a 7:00 pm bedtime.
5:00 pm	Dinner	Feed baby anything that you've already established as a "safe" food during the lunch/11:00 am feed.
6:00 pm	Bath	This part of your routine will help baby come to expect bedtime.
6:45 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
7:00 pm	Bedtime	Try to do the same thing at bedtime each night to establish a routine and help prepare baby for sleep. Bedtime can be as simple as reading a story and singing a song before putting baby into the crib awake.
10:30 pm	dreamfeed	Feed your baby 6-8 oz of milk (or an almost full to full breast feed). See our dedicated dreamfeed section for useful tips.

## 6-9 MONTHS

What's new?

As your baby gets older, there are a few routine changes we recommend. Why? Chances are, you'll find that something that worked at 5 months is no longer working at 7. Here are the key ways your routine can change to best support your developing baby:

- Drop from three naps to two
- Extend awake times
- Replace the 10:30 am milk feed with a snack
- Gradually shift lunch closer to 11:30 or 12:00
- Phase out the dreamfeed

Also note:

By this age, natural iron stores will be running low. You can help iron absorption by offering a protein with a food that contains Vitamin C.

Encourage your child to eat more vegetables than fruit; this can discourage a sweet tooth later on. Try to provide a ratio of vegetables to fruit of 2 to 1.

As your baby approaches nine months of age, if you have been using mainly pureed foods, start to move away from them and start providing foods that are lumpier and or mashed. At 9 months, solid foods babies can be given include:



Wheat-Based Baby Cereals



Toast fingers with butter



Pasta



Egg yolks (must be well cooked)



Pumpkin, Peppers, Sprouts, Cabbage, Broccoli



Cooked carrot sticks and broccoli



Pulses such as chick peas and beans



Mild cheddar cheese and cottage cheese



Avocado, apricot, melon, peaches



Crackers



Meat (mild and not smoked due to salt levels)



Any of the Stage 2 Baby Food Jars Sold at Grocery Stores

## SOLIDS & ROUTINE: FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS

If your baby is eating too much fruit after dinner or later in the afternoon, it can result in a bowel movement around 5:00am. If this starts, offer fruit earlier in the day instead, ideally at breakfast and lunch only.

TIME	ACTIVITY	NOTES
7:00 am	Wake & milk feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
8:00 am	Breakfast	Remember, breakfast is the last meal to incorporate into your baby's day. Use 2 oz of formula or breast milk for mixing with solids. Offer water in a sippy cup. Select foods that you've found to be safe during your lunch window.
9:30 am	Nap #1	This nap should come about 2.5 hours after waking and starting the day.
10:30 am	Snack	Could be some fruit and a cracker.
11:30 am/ 12:00 pm	Lunch	Serve with water in a sippy cup.
12:30 pm/ 1:00 pm	Nap #2	This nap should be 1.5-2 hours long.
2:30 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
5:00 pm	Dinner	Select foods that you've found to be safe during the lunch window.
6:00 pm	Bath & Bedtime Routine	
6:30 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
7:00 pm	Bedtime	As you phase out the third nap, you may need to put your baby to bed earlier. You should have about 4 hours of awake time between when they wake from their second nap and when they go to bed.
10:30 pm	dreamfeed	4-8 oz of milk, phased out over time (see our dreamfeed section for instructions).

Thinking of starting sleep training with your baby? If so, avoid introducing new foods while adjusting their sleeping schedule. New foods are huge variable to their sleep and the two things should be separated by at least two weeks.

## 9-12 MONTHS

What's new?

Awake times will continue to get longer as your baby gets older. Some typical ways you can adapt the daily routine at this stage include:

- Shortening the first nap (it can be as short as 45 minutes)
- Offering lunch later, at 12:15, and dinner later, at 5:30
- Encouraging self-feeding
- Introducing a sippy cup
- Shifting your afternoon milk feed from the bottle or breast, offering a sippy cup with milk and a small snack

This is a wonderful time to encourage self-feeding if you haven't yet. Work with diced, chopped or mashed foods and get that washcloth damp! Offer water in a sippy or regular cup at all meals.

After nine months of age, milk intake should still be relatively high, a minimum of 17 fl oz. If you are heading back to work when your baby turns 12 months, now is a good time to start getting them used to taking milk (can be expressed breast milk from another source). So choose one sippy cup and be consistent with it.

During this stage, you can offer milk in a sippy cup at the 2:30pm/3:00pm feed. If you are bottle-feeding, the transition may be as simple as replacing the nipple with the sippy cup top if you are using a bottle system that supports this. For breastfed babies, the concept can sometimes take a little longer. Once you make the transition, keep moving forwards by swapping all feeds to the sippy cup by the time your child is a year old – or if you are breastfeeding and heading back to work depending on your work hours, you may be able to do a direct feeding in the morning or before bed.

When beginning this transition, it is normal for them to refuse the cup, or even launch it at you at first! Don't feel too offended if this happens. Any baby can learn if you present something consistently, so keep offering.





## SOLIDS & ROUTINE: FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS

Here's how your baby's day could look at this stage:

TIME	ACTIVITY	NOTES
7:00 am	Wake & milk feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
8:00 am	Breakfast	
9:30 am	Nap #1	This nap should come about 2.5 hours after waking and starting the day. It may get as short as 45 minutes in length as your baby nears 12 months.
10:15 am	Snack	Serve a small snack with some water.
12:15 pm	Lunch	
1:00 pm	Nap #2	This nap should be 1.5-2 hours long.
2:30 pm/ 3:00 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
5:00 pm	Dinner	
6:00 pm	Bath & Bedtime Routine	
6:30 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
7:00 pm	Bedtime	

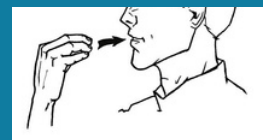
### Language Tip

Teaching American Sign Language (ASL) to infants and toddlers facilitates communication between parents and children. Frustration and outbursts are lessened because baby can immediately communicate wants and needs before they can physically pronounce the words. This is especially helpful when it comes to feeding time. Teaching your baby the signs for words such as "more", "full", "thirsty", "milk" and some specific foods such as "banana" will help to facilitate the transition to eating solids.

If you're interested in learning some ASL with your little one, there are many useful resources and videos on Pinterest or YouTube.



"more"



"eat"

Some community centers even offer specific classes for babies.

## 12-18 MONTHS

What's new?

The big change during this stage is that you'll phase out the morning nap. We often recommend doing this at around 14 months. Many parents find that this change gives them a lot of freedom to get out and have fun in the mornings.

By the time your child reaches one year of age, they have had a number of different foods and are old enough to try other foods that were previously avoided due to potential allergies.

Their eating routine doesn't change too much; your toddler should be eating small amounts of a variety of nutritious food every two to three hours, or when they indicate that they are hungry. Children have a small window of opportunity when it comes to their appetites (less than 10 minutes!) so feed them before the moment passes – to maintain blood sugar levels, children should be fed ideally every 2.5 hours.

Don't get into food battles with your child. Hunger levels will vary and one day your child may like eggs, the next - maybe not. This is normal. Avoid bribery or any type of forced feeding. Eating should be a pleasure, not a battle of wills. Modeling is one of the best ways to show your child how to have a good and healthy relationship with food.

Children tend to love finger foods. Offer meals for a limited time (for no more than 20 minutes, for example) and calmly remove whatever food is left. Offer a variety of foods including dairy, meat, vegetables, fruit and cereals and if your child prefers one food over another, don't panic – look at what they eat over a week not per meal.

At this stage, children can eat what the rest of the family is eating without too many changes.

Keep experimenting and offer them a nutritious, balanced menu. Over the course of a week you will see that you have been quite successful in getting all of the necessary fruits and vegetables eaten!

After twelve months of age, you can switch from formula / breast milk to regular milk if you wish. Milk options include dairy, rice, almond coconut, and soy.

With milk intake on the gradual decline during this stage, you should be substituting solids for milk.

Here are two examples of equivalencies:

- 1 oz of cheese = 6 fl. oz. milk
- 125 grams of yogurt = 4 fl. oz. milk

## SOLIDS & ROUTINE: FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS

Here's how your baby's day could look at this stage:

TIME	ACTIVITY	NOTES
7:00 am	Wake & milk feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
8:30 am	Breakfast	Could include eggs, cereal, fresh fruit, toast or yogurt.
9:30 am	Optional Nap	Phase out this nap as your baby near 14 months.
10:15 am	Snack	Could include fruit or vegetables.
12:30 pm	Lunch	Could be a tuna sandwich or macaroni and cheese
1:00 pm	Nap	This nap should be 1.5-2 hours long.
2:30 pm/ 3:00 pm	Milk Feed	6 oz milk (a small snack will come later).
3:15 pm	Snack	Small snack (could be a smoothie, cheese or popcorn).
5:30 pm	Dinner	Offer what the family is eating, with any necessary modifications.
6:00 pm	Bath & Bedtime Routine	
6:45 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
7:00 pm	Bedtime	



## 18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS

Not much will change in terms of routines and solids, however, many children phase out the afternoon nap around the age of three. Additionally, milk intake will go down. Here's what the day could look like in this case:

TIME	ACTIVITY	
7:00 am	Wake & milk feed	4-6 oz if bottle feeding.
8:30 am	Breakfast	Could include eggs, cereal, fresh fruit, toast or yogurt.
10:30 am	Snack	Could include fruit or vegetables.
12:30 pm	Lunch	
1:00 pm	Nap	This may or may not apply, depending on your child.
3:00 pm	Snack	4 oz milk or water with a small snack.
5:30 pm	Dinner	Offer what the family is eating, with any necessary modifications.
6:00 pm	Bath & Bedtime Routine	
6:45 pm	Milk Feed	6-8 oz if bottle feeding.
7:00 pm	Bedtime	

A sudden dislike of milk is one of those small ways that toddlers exert their growing independence. Continue to serve milk, but don't force it. At the same time, provide other dairy foods, such as cheese, cottage cheese, smoothies and yogurt. These are great substitutes.





## Making Baby Food

Although time-consuming, making your own baby food is the best way to know exactly what you are giving your child to eat and gives you complete control over what goes in your baby's mouth. However this is not going to be for everyone.

There's a clear cost advantage to making your own baby food, especially if you use local vegetables and fruits in season. Homemade baby food costs approximately 30-50% less than commercial baby food but of course, making your own food is also timely and heart breaking if your little diner does not seem to like your best efforts.

Homemade baby food is only as nutritious as you make it. For example, overcooked home or ill prepared baby food scores fewer nutrients than the baby food you buy in the store.

Use the crispest green beans and the freshest of apples, but what is equally important is what you don't use. Do not add salt, spices or herbs (babies prefer plain food, but you can be experimental as they get older), margarine or butter (not necessary) unless advised by your doctor. Also avoid adding sugar, honey, corn syrup or other sweeteners, as this can lead to dental and health problems or sugar highs. Childhood diabetes is continuing to rise, and you're best to avoid any sweeteners.

To make your own baby food you will need:

- A completely clean work area (don't worry about the rest of your home!)
- Clean kitchen utensils
- Forks to mash bananas, mangoes, and avocados or other soft fruit
- A finely meshed sieve or grinder/ potato ricer or if you are really fancy, a baby blender
- Ice cube trays to freeze foods in the perfect portion sizes

Making your own baby food is economical, environmentally friendly, efficient and easy! However, if time is at a premium for you, there are healthy pre-made options available to you. Being a Confident Parent means that you pick what works best for you and your family, guilt-free.

## GETTING STARTED

Here's how to make fruit and vegetable-based baby food:

1. Choose fresh or unsalted frozen vegetables and fruit. Canned contain salt and canned fruit often contains syrup.
2. Peas, green and yellow beans, sweet potatoes, parsnips, white potatoes, asparagus, zucchini, and pumpkin are excellent choices for making baby food. Root vegetables also pair well when working on adding in meats.
3. Consider delaying introducing spinach, cabbage, beets, broccoli, cauliflower, turnips, and squash until your baby is at least seven months old.
4. To prepare fresh vegetables and fruit, wash thoroughly before peeling.
5. Cook all fresh and frozen vegetables before pureeing or mashing, cutting into small bite sized pieces.
6. To conserve nutrients, leave food whole when possible, or cut into large pieces, and have the water boiling before you add the vegetables in for steaming.
7. Cook vegetables in a small amount of water and only until tender crisp. Steaming or microwave cooking are ideal.
8. When / if pureeing, add unsweetened fruit juice, cooking water or broth, if necessary, to make smooth consistency.

Making meat and other protein baby food:

1. Choose lean cuts, either fresh or frozen.
2. Good meat choices include chicken, turkey, lamb, beef, pork and veal.
3. Legumes and tofu are good alternate protein choices.
4. Use low-fat cooking methods; either braise, roast, stew, steam, or boil.
5. Cut foods into small pieces to decrease processing time.

## DAWN'S TIP

With some fresh produce, a blender and set of ice cube trays, you can make food in quantity and freeze it in individual portions. This means you only need to make food for your baby once or twice a week. Once you get your technique down, you will find it only takes about half an hour a week to produce healthy meals for your child.

### STORING AND SERVING HOMEMADE BABY FOOD

Serve baby food immediately after it is made or refrigerate or freeze. Food at room temperature increases the risk of contamination if out for longer than 4 hours. If refrigerating, cover the container with foil, plastic wrap or a tight-fitting lid. Store in a refrigerator for no longer than one or two days. Pureed fruits and vegetables can be frozen for up to three months; meats for one month. When making first foods, keep them separate to begin with and then you can add and mix foods together easily.

### HOW TO FREEZE BABY FOOD

When freezing baby food, ice cube trays are the perfect portion size. Here's how to use them:

1. Sterilize all utensils in hot, soapy water, in the dishwasher at a temperature of 180 degrees Fahrenheit or in boiling water.
2. Pour a serving of pureed food into each cube of an ice-cube tray.
3. Cover the tray with plastic wrap and put in the freezer.
4. When the food is frozen, pop the cubes out of the tray and store them in a freezer bag.
5. Prevent the destruction of the vitamins in the food by using a straw to suck as much air as possible out the freezer bag before sealing.

Once you have prepared a batch of food, do not forget to label it. Note of the preparation date and the contents. This will help you to "rotate" stored foods in a timely manner and help you identify them; pureed foods tend to look alike. It is also important to do this in the event your baby experiences an allergic reaction to a new food.

### SERVING HOMEMADE BABY FOOD

To serve frozen food, take a serving from the freezer bag just before you are ready to serve it. Options for thawing and heating include heating in a double boiler, in a custard cup in hot water or in a microwave. Before serving, stir food well and make sure to check the temperature; it is possible that the interior of the food is very hot and could potentially burn your baby's mouth. Serving fresh food from the very beginning will help your baby be more receptive to trying and tasting new flavours, textures and types of food. Never refreeze pureed food.

# Recipe Inspirations

Providing healthy, balanced nutrition to your baby can be fun. However, with baby's first foods it is best to keep things simple.

There are endless combinations that can be created for a delicious meal. Here are a few tried and true combinations to make meals seem less repetitive and bland:



Apples & Blueberries



Rice & Lentils



Sweet Potatoes & Pears



Chicken & Sweet Potato



Yogurt & Raspberries



Chicken & Apple



Carrots & Pears



Green Beans & Pear



Raspberries & Pears



Banana & Avocado



Pumpkin, Apple, & Banana

You will find that your repertoire for creating new meals grows with the introduction of each new food. For example, once lean ground beef and potatoes have been vetted, shepherd's pie can be on the menu. It will continue to be a pleasure to cook for your family as your baby's digestive system matures and your confidence grows!

## DAWN'S TIP

You can take a short cut by buying an 'adult' jar of natural applesauce from your local grocery store. Read the labels if you are unsure. The only ingredients it should contain are apples and water or just apples. A few companies add ascorbic acid (vitamin C) or citric acid to their natural applesauce; this is fine.



# Challenges With Solids

Starting solids is a big change for your baby's system. In this section, we'll talk about two of the challenges that can accompany solids: allergies and constipation.

## ALLERGIES (AND SENSITIVITIES)

Reactions to food can range from mild to severe. Symptoms of reactions can include:

- Red patches around the mouth
- Hives on the body
- A distressed baby who is hard to console
- Change in bowel movements
- Vomiting
- Blood in the stool

It can be surprising what babies can be sensitive to. Something as seemingly benign as celery can cause a reaction. But at the same time, don't be overly cautious. Remember, this is meant to be fun for you and for baby! Follow our guidelines for food introduction and you'll be able to watch for signs of reaction. It's best to check with your doctor or paediatrician if you have any concerns about allergies.

## FOODS TO AVOID DURING THE FIRST YEAR

In the first year, your baby's digestive system is continuously developing. They may be sensitive to foods without you realizing this yet, and other foods may present choking hazards. Food sensitivities are on the rise, with reactions presenting themselves in a variety of forms, from mild to severe.

Anytime you offer a new food, be cautious and keep your eye out for reactions. Here are some of the most common high allergen foods:



Black or Green Tea: Which can prevent the absorption of iron



Strawberries



Honey: Which can harbour spores of clostridium botulinum



Cows Milk: Some babies can't digest the protein, it doesn't have all the nutrients needed and it contains minerals in amounts that can damage infant kidneys.



Citrus Fruits



Egg Whites (Yolks are okay if cooked hard)



Processed Meats And Cured Meats: Which usually contain high amounts of salt, fat, and often, chemical preservatives.



Shellfish

## A WORD ABOUT NUTS

Recently, there has been a complete reversal in when experts recommend introducing nuts and nut products. Previously, the recommendation was to avoid nuts before a child's first birthday, and wait up to three years for families with a history of nut allergies. Now, many experts recommend introducing peanuts earlier, between 4 and 6 months, as a means of preventing peanut allergies from developing. Because there is still some disagreement between medical professionals on this subject, it is important to check with your doctor or paediatrician before feeding nuts to your child.

## DEALING WITH CONSTIPATION

When you add new foods into your baby's diet, you will likely see a change in bowel movements, and while there is no "normal" from baby to baby, you probably have an idea of what is normal for your baby. Breastfed babies can go days without a bowel movement as there is little by-product.

It is not unusual for your baby to experience constipation from time to time. Constipation is apparent when your baby's stools are hard, dry, large or pellet-like in shape, they can be difficult to pass and in some cases can cause anal bleeding. If your baby is constipated, you may see:

- A hard belly
- Loss of appetite
- Discomfort, crying, irritability or pain before or during a stool
- Dry, hard, pellet-like stools
- Three or less bowel movements per week (although this can be normal for breastfed babies)

Please note: liquid stools or marks can be also be a sign of constipation; they can slip past the blockage of hard stools in the lower intestine. If you see this, don't make the assumption that it's diarrhea. These bowel movements will usually be accompanied by some of the above.

Insufficient fluids, food intake and underfeeding are all common causes of constipation in babies. When solids are first introduced it is normal to see a change in both the frequency and appearance of your baby's bowel movements. There are several possible reasons your baby may be constipated:

- Formula can be harder to digest than breast milk and is not as much of it is absorbed by the body, causing stools to be firm and bulky. Breast milk produces stools that are almost always soft, even if a baby hasn't passed stools for a few days.
- Babies often become constipated when they start solids, as their bodies learn how to manage new foods. As with adults, low-fibre foods and not enough fluids also contribute to constipation as well as too much iron rich foods.
- Certain milestones or illnesses can also cause your baby to refuse milk: teething, thrush, a cold or an ear infection.
- Older children may not be drinking enough milk or water with their solid foods.

Check with your doctor or pediatrician if you suspect your baby is experiencing constipation or an allergic reaction to food.

## THINGS TO TRY WHILE WAITING FOR TREATMENT

- Gently moving baby's legs in a bicycling motion to help move the hard stools along the intestine
- Ensuring that you are making the formula with the right ratio of powder to water or liquid to water; or switch to a different brand or type
- Increasing the fiber in your baby's diet by adding in pureed apples, apricots, prunes or legumes, or adding a small amount of high-fibre cereal or fruit puree to your baby's breakfast cereal. (Keep your fruits in the morning though ideally as they can ferment over night if given after dinner).
- Warm water mixed with prune or apple juice; offer water or diluted prune or apple juice between meals (ration of 1 tablespoon of juice to 50 mls. of water). Can be offered on a spoon, in a dropper or bottle. Do not offer fruit juice on a daily basis as they may damage developing teeth or your child may start to prefer this over water.
- Colon massage, using two fingers starting above the navel and in a C-like motion apply some gentle pressure, going backwards and forwards.
- Separating milk feeds from solids foods, offering foods first thing in the morning will reduce baby's appetite - cutting back fluid intake with it. Offer fluids first to avoid this.
- Offer solids slowly, starting with just one teaspoon.

With your attention, treatment and time, your baby will soon get back to regular bowel movements.

## Warm Weather Reminder

In warmer climates your baby may need more fluid throughout the day.

For babies older than 6 months, you can offer some water in addition to milk. Remember that there is fluid in fruits and vegetables too. The average fluid intake to stay hydrated is:

6 months: 30 fl oz

7-11 months: 33 fl oz

3 years: 37 fl oz

4-6 years: 47 fl oz

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