

Introducing Solid Foods

Your toddler may be ready for solid foods when all of these are true:

- ✓ he's about 6 months old
- ✓ he can sit and hold his head up
- ✓ he can watch a spoon, open his mouth and close his lips around it
- ✓ he can keep most of his food in his mouth



HOW TO Introduce solid food

1. Pick a time when your toddler is wide awake and has an appetite, but isn't too hungry. Solids can be offered before or after breastfeeding.
2. Sit him up in his feeding chair, facing you.
3. Eat with your baby, so he can learn by watching you.
4. Serve him the same foods as the rest of the family, without added sugar or salt.



DID YOU KNOW

Gagging is normal when learning to eat. When food slips to the back of your toddler's tongue before he's ready to swallow, he'll gag to prevent choking (see [Reducing Choking Hazards](#)). When this happens, stay calm and reassure him. If you panic, he may become afraid to try new foods.

See [Understanding Food Allergies](#) to learn more about the introduction of solid foods and food allergies.

First Foods

Your baby's first foods should be rich in iron – like meat, fish, chicken, eggs, lentils, tofu and iron-fortified baby cereal.

Meat, fish or shellfish will be easier for your toddler to eat if it's moist and in tiny pieces. Try:

- mixing small bits with water, human milk, mashed vegetables or gravy
- shredding it, or serving it ground up
- using dark meat rather than white-meat chicken
- being sure to take out any bones and shells from fish

Cook whole birds to 82°C (180°F), and all other meat (including game meat, fish and shellfish) until well done, to 74°C (165°F). The juices should be clear, with no trace of pink.

Homemade Baby Food

Your toddler can eat the same foods your family normally eats. Soft foods may be mashed, ground, minced or pureed. Or try finger foods like small pieces of well-cooked vegetables, soft fruits without skins, cooked pasta or grated cheese.



HOW TO Keep homemade baby food safe

- Wash counters and utensils with soap and water. After preparing raw meat, clean up with 1 teaspoon (5 ml) bleach mixed with 3 cups (750 ml) water.
- Throw out worn cutting boards, which can hide germs.
- Put leftovers in the fridge and use within 2 or 3 days. Or freeze them and use within 2 months.



HOW TO Use the microwave to safely reheat baby food

- Stir at least once halfway through to ensure even heating.
- Taste the food to ensure it's not too hot before giving it to your child.
- Don't use the microwave to heat bottles; warm them in hot water instead.
- Only use plastic containers or plastic wrap labelled "microwave safe."
- Don't use damaged, stained or smelly containers.