

Introducing solids

'Introducing solids' describes when an infant goes from being fed only milk to gradually becoming used to a variety of family foods.

Resources

Breastfeeding: and family foods booklet
Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Brodribb, W. (ed) 2019, *Breastfeeding Management in Australia*.
5th ed. Australian Breastfeeding Association, Victoria.

Moumin, N. A., Green, T. J., Golley, R. K., & Netting, M. J. (2020). Are the nutrient and textural properties of Australian commercial infant and toddler foods consistent with infant feeding advice? *British Journal of Nutrition*. DOI: 10.1017/S0007114520001695

National Health and Medical Research Council 2013, *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council.

National Health and Medical Research Council (2012) *Infant Feeding Guidelines*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council.



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When to introduce solids

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends infants are exclusively breastfed for 'around 6 months' when it is recommended to introduce solids. The extensive literature review which informed this recommendation included evidence pertaining to the timing of introducing solids and allergy development.

At around 6 months of age, infants will tend to show signs of being developmentally ready for solids. Around this age, infants will:

- no longer display the tongue-extrusion reflex
- be able to sit upright with minimal support
- begin to show interest in eating when others do
- be able to reach for and grab food and put it into their mouth.

How to introduce solids and what to introduce

Infants should be sitting upright when offered solid food. Some babies like to take the lead and be offered finger food from the beginning. Other babies are content to be offered food from a spoon. Some parents begin with pureed food, but it is important infants begin to chew soft foods from around 7 months.

Human milk continues to be an infant's most important food for the first 12 months. Infants only need to be offered tiny amounts of solid food to begin with. The amounts can gradually be increased over the next 6 months. The Australian Dietary Guidelines list recommended daily average amounts for 7–12-month-old infants and these are smaller than many mothers realise. Examples are 30–40 g vegetables, 10 g fruit, 50–70 g cereal foods, 30 g meat or alternatives, and 10 mL yogurt or 5 g cheese. Breastmilk or formula intake should be around 600 mL. Rapid introduction of large amounts of solids could lead to insufficient breastmilk intake, inflammatory breast conditions and a decrease in milk supply.

Typically, home cooked/prepared food is best to introduce infants to because it is the family diet that parents want their infants to learn to enjoy. Most commercial baby foods are of low nutritional value, sweet-tasting and in purée form. A variety of family foods (including allergenic foods) can be introduced from around 6 months. Between 6 and 12 months, an infant's iron and zinc stores from birth start to deplete. Hence, it is recommended that amongst the first foods infants are introduced to include foods which are good sources of these minerals (eg red meat).