
Your Guide to Baby's First Foods
By Laura Kopec
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Introduction

Being a first time parent is filled with not only wonder and excitement, but also with confusion and anxiety about what to do on EVERYTHING! Many first time parents have so many questions when it comes to first foods, they are lost where to begin. And a list of foods is not enough information to a new parent. What to eat is only the first of a long list of questions I hear from new parents. I wrote this book for the new parent who has entered the wonderment of parenthood and is dedicated to careful planning and understanding about first foods. Like so many of my other books, I wrote this book in a straight up and easy to understand format. You asked the questions, and I give you the educational answers you seek.

First let's understand the importance of this journey called first foods. I am a firm believer we are what we eat. And what we eat is most important in the early years of our lives when growth is the most significant. In the first year of life, we grow more proportionally than any other time. So, if we are what we eat, and we grow more in the first year than any other time in our lives, then it stands to reason that the first foods given to your baby are some of the most crucial decisions you will make as a parent. First foods should not be taken lightly. What you feed your baby is one of the most important decisions you make as a parent, and can have long lasting consequences or rewards depending on the choices you make.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine believed that all disease originates in the stomach. Yet, most of us have no idea of the correlation between our eating and our

health; as a result, we are completely out of touch with regard to how food affects our development and our well being. Eating does not only affect our physical health but also affects our mood, our sleep patterns, and our ability to think clearly and focus. Our society believes colic, constipation, sleep issues, food allergies, and picky eaters are a normal part of having a child. Common yes, but not normal.

Right now more children then ever before suffer from food allergies, child obesity, child diabetes, ADD, ADHD, and autism. According to the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network the number of peanut allergy related incidences in children doubled from 1997 to 2002. In less than 10 years, 1 out of every 3 children in this country could have diabetes. Approximately 1 in 100 now have celiac, and developmental disorders are growing in epidemic proportions. In 1970, approximately 1 in 10,000 children were diagnosed with autism, and today, according to the Autism Society of America, "Autism is the most common of the Pervasive Developmental Disorders, affecting 1 in 100 births." (Center for Disease Control Prevention, 2007) This means as many as 1.5 million Americans today are believed to have some form of autism. Based on statistics from the US Department of Education autism is growing at a startling rate of 10-17 percent per year. At this rate the Autism Society estimates autism could reach 4 million Americans by the next decade. As multiple health issues and statistics grow, parents should take note about what they are feeding their children.

So if you are like the many parents that come into my office, you are concerned about what to feed your baby. You believe in the importance of first foods, not only for healthy digestion but for a healthy child. Parents tell me it is very difficult to know where to start when it comes to "first foods" and tell me information they find on the internet is

confusing. When trying to make these decisions for the first time, you want more than a recipe for homemade puree.

This booklet is very different, based on a combination of common sense, my own traditional view of food, and years of personal research combined with a straightforward and simple approach. The information presented here is based on my personal belief and experience as a holistic nutritionist and mother of three healthy children. The information in this booklet is my opinion, and is based on what I have learned along the way both in research and in practice. The information in this booklet is not a replacement for medical advice, and is not a substitute for a relationship with your pediatrician.

When should I begin thinking about giving my baby food?

Around four months of age you will begin make an accurate assessment of your baby's developmental progress in order to determine when first food is appropriate. Your baby's developmental progress is measured according to specific milestones. These milestones give you the opportunity to determine the right time to introduce food. Timing is a very important decision because if your baby's digestive system is too immature for real food and lacks certain digestive enzymes necessary to break down foods, introducing foods too early can cause health problems.

Many of us know what vitamins and minerals are, but many of us are completely unfamiliar with the term "digestive enzymes". Digestive enzymes are the live chemicals generated within the body that cause the necessary reaction in food in order for that

particular food to be broken down by the body. Enzymes not only exist in the human body, but also exist in whole raw foods. Raw fruits and vegetables contain live enzymes to assist in their digestion. You can actually see these enzymes at work in certain foods. An example of this is when you cut into an apple and the surface of the apple begins to turn brown. This coloring is the reaction of the apple pulp to the knife. When the knife cuts through the apple, there is breakage in the cell walls. This breakage causes the enzymes to be released, enzymes which assist the digestive process. This same reaction from the apple also occurs when we bite into the apple with our teeth, and the apple comes in contact with our saliva. Our saliva contains valuable enzymes to help begin the digestive cycle.

Our saliva contains important digestive enzymes crucial to the function of a healthy digestive system. The first digestive enzyme in saliva is known as amylase. The enzyme amylase is necessary to break down carbohydrates. The enzyme amylase breaks down the starch in foods. Saliva also contains lipase, which helps to break down fats, and saliva also contains antimicrobial enzymes to help kill certain bacteria.

Baby should have a digestive system capable of breaking down and digesting new food before introducing these foods. In order to help recognize whether or not baby's digestive system is able to break down these foods it is necessary to determine whether baby is generating salivary enzymes. How do you know if your baby's digestive system is ready? Typically your baby's digestive maturity will line up with certain developmental milestones. These developmental milestones can assist you in determining baby's physical maturity as it relates to digestion.

When is my baby really ready for food?

The following list of developmental milestones is a sign that your baby is ready for food. Once all these milestones have been reached *cumulatively* baby is most likely ready for some food, but not all foods. Chances are, without all of these milestones, your baby is not ready for foods. When in doubt you should consult your pediatrician. For the sake of writing ease, I will alternate pronouns "he or him" and "she and her" when referring to baby.

1. Baby has reached a minimum of 16 weeks of age. If your baby was born pre-term or has health issues related to digestion consult your pediatrician to determine the time appropriate for introducing new foods to baby, but it may be necessary to wait 16 weeks from their expected due date if they are premature.
2. Baby has doubled her birth weight.
3. Baby can hold his own head up.
4. Baby can rotate her head from left to right.
5. Baby can follow you with his eyes if you move from left to right.
6. Baby can see you from across the room.
7. Baby can get any part of her hand into her mouth, be it a finger, two fingers, or her fist.
8. Baby has an interest in what is going on at the table, and an interest in other people eating.

9. Baby has lost his "tongue thrust" otherwise known as extrusion reflex. Try this by placing a clean finger onto baby's lower lip and if baby opens his mouth he has lost his tongue thrust. If baby responds to your finger on his lower lip by thrusting his tongue out, then he has NOT lost his tongue thrust.
10. Baby knows how to take a spoon into her mouth. Try this by taking an empty baby spoon and place it in her mouth, if baby "takes" the spoon, then she has achieved this milestone.
11. Baby shows an increase in hunger. Baby may or may not be waking up in the middle of the night to feed after spending several weeks sleeping through the night. Or baby is doubling up on feedings before going down for night, and you are having difficulty satisfying her even though your milk supply is adequate. Note: If this milestone appears *without* the others, then chances are baby is experiencing a growth spurt and you can look toward healthy herbs like Fenugreek to increase your milk flow.

If baby is given food before all of these milestones have been reached, or if baby does not break down foods correctly because the foods given are not as optimal as they could be, there may be not only short term consequences, but also long term consequences as well. She can have trouble digesting foods and become gassy or constipated (an example of a short term consequence). If she does not digest foods effectively, and becomes gassy or constipated, the gut flora (the live healthy microorganisms that inhabit the intestinal track) may become compromised. The gut flora is amazing, maintaining a significant percentage of our immune system. There is the risk of a compromised immune system

(within the gut flora) affecting the body's response to food as in allergies or sensitivities (an example of a long term consequence). Food allergies and food sensitivities are strongly associated with the integrity of the small and large intestine. Therefore a healthy digestive system should be a huge consideration during the introduction of foods to your baby.

Should I wait even longer than 4-6 months to introduce foods?

Sometimes it may be in the best interest of the child to wait a little bit longer than six months of age, but no later than eight months unless recommended by your pediatrician. Once baby becomes eight months old, there are potential health consequences such as an iron deficiency. Iron stores are in place at birth, and even if you are nursing and take a prenatal with iron, your baby will basically "run out" of iron after eight months. After six months of age baby will need the additional nutritional value contained in whole food such as iron and other proteins that cannot be completely provided for her in breast milk or formula. Baby also needs to further develop such large gross motor skills such as chewing, and fine motor skills such as reaching for food in order to one day put food in his own mouth. Without exercising these skills baby may lack in overall development.

Not only is timing important but the kind of food is very important. If baby is given complicated proteins too early, such as egg and milk, there can be stress to the intestines, stress to the skin (baby eczema an all too common problem), chronic constipation or stress to the kidneys (potential risk for late bedwetting).

Are there any recommendations for preparing and serving baby's first foods?

Baby's foods can possess the highest nutritional levels available to us in food with careful selection of fresh whole, organic ingredients and simple preparation of baby's food. In addition to the selection and preparation of these foods, following certain recommendations (tips) can help you feel you giving your baby the best possible experience with first foods.

1. Tip #1: All foods should be served warm or at room temperature (never hot and never cold).

Baby's immature digestion is fragile, and baby's system is new and much more sensitive than an adults. Hot food can burn baby's sensitive mouth. Cold food can be shocking to the stomach and can irritate the stomach's ability to process foods correctly. Really cold foods, especially ice water actually is irritating to the stomach in all ages despite how good a cold drink feels on a hot day. It is important for baby that his experience with food is enjoyable and not filled with discomfort and pain.

2. Tip #2: Buy and prepare only organic foods for the first year of baby's life.

Pesticides and herbicides are chemicals used in our agricultural practices. These chemicals, while considered legally safe, can overwhelm a baby's young immune system.

Foods contaminated with these chemicals can taste bitter and distasteful to the highly sensitive young taste buds in your baby.

For many parents, eating organic is expensive and is a low priority. Eating exclusively organic is highly recommended during the first year of introducing foods. Eating organic during the first year ensures each particular food is in its purest form. Eating organic during the first year while new foods are being introduced can increase the chance your child will like the new food because it will not have the taste of chemicals on it, which a new baby can detect with such sensitive taste buds. And lastly, while baby digestive system and immune system is most vulnerable, pesticides and herbicides on the food can be a huge toxic burden for some children to work through. After the first year, baby's immune system is still immature and in a developing state and it is highly recommended that certain fruits and vegetables often found to contain high levels of pesticides be organic. Fruits such as apples, berries, grapes, pears, peaches, nectarines and cherries are recommended organic. All melons, bell peppers, spinach and potatoes are recommended organic. Fruits low in pesticide such as bananas and avocado may be conventional after the first year. Once animal proteins are introduced, it is highly recommended these foods be organic, or at the very least range free or cage free.

3. Tip #3: When making your own pureed fruits and vegetables, make sure you wash and peel the skin off any fruit or vegetable with skin.

At this point in baby's development the skin of most fruit and vegetables will not cook soft enough, and can be a choking hazard.

4. Tip #4: Use only the highest grade of purified water such as reverse osmosis or distilled water.

Unfortunately most of our tap water is not purified enough for baby's immature immunse system. Tap water can be contaminated with many different harmful organisms, too small for the naked eye to see. The most concerning of these contaminants are pharmaceutical drugs that may contaminate our drinking supply. Pharmaceuticals can not be removed with a simple filter.

5. Tip #5: Introduce a small amount of food, anywhere from 1 teaspoon to 2 tablespoons after baby is full from a feeding of breast milk.

At this stage in baby's development and with the first introduction of food, breast milk will continue to be baby's main source of nutrition. If food is offered first, a baby with an excited interest in new food may fill up on solid food and not take a full feeding of breast milk. If baby fills up on food over breast milk at this stage, she may not getting all the nutrients she needs. Since food variety is simple and only a few foods baby still needs all the nutrition, enzymes and antibodies provided through breast milk, maybe even more so with new foods entering the digestive system. Adequate breast milk during the introduction of first foods assists baby's digestive system with crucial enzymes for improved breakdown of food.

6. Tip #6: Introduce new foods at breakfast or lunch so that if baby has an upset tummy it can be addressed early in the day and does not keep baby and you up through the night.

Remember eating food is a completely new experience for your baby, and you have no idea how her young system will respond. Serving a new food to baby early in the day gives baby the time to adjust to this new food throughout the day, and if she were to react adversely, you want the daylight to be able to deal with any issues baby might have. If baby shows any mild digestive issues such as a colicky or gassy response to the new food, consider giving her an extra feeding of breast milk which may soothe her tummy. If baby shows a serious allergic reaction to food, seek immediate medical attention. The potential for a food allergy is also why caution should be exercised and following a particular introduction schedule is important.

7. Tip #7: Each next food should be introduced anywhere from four days to one week before adding another food.

It is easy to be a new parent excited with your baby's excitement and interest in food. For some parents there may also be the relief of not having all your baby's nutritional needs met through breast milk. In spite of the excitement you might feel, patience is your best friend through this time. Baby needs to go through this process slowly and with all the necessary precautions to ensure her experience is pleasurable and healthy.

8. Tip #8: Never, ever use a microwave for heating baby's food.

Microwaved food is radiated food. Even in small doses which are proposed to be safe, microwaved food is still radiated food. In holistic circles microwaved food is often speculated to changed or altered at the nutrient level. Better to be extra careful. You do not get back the first two years of baby's development, and with a little bit of extra effort, baby's immune system can be as strong as nature intended.

9. Tip #9: Do not spice, salt, or sugar baby's food.

It is absolutely crucial that you do not spice, salt or sugar your baby's food at this time. Yes, food should be bland to you. The new experience and heightened senses on baby—makes eating anything but bland. In addition, salt and sugar may destroy taste buds, which will eventually contribute to a picky eater in the toddler years. Keep baby food plain and simple, allowing her to fully experiencing the food itself keeping baby's palette wide and varied by the time she is a toddler.

What is the recommendation for baby's very, very first food, and what else do I need to know?

There are a lot of differing opinions on first foods. For years, my recommendation used to be a homemade organic brown rice cereal. Now studies indicate all grains should be given once baby is nine months old, so a "safer" starch is a more appropriate first food

such as sweet potato or winter squash (butternut or acorn). Since baby's digestive system is still developing with regard to carbohydrates, only certain cooked fruits and cooked vegetables are part of baby's very first foods. And animal products and cow dairy need to be avoided since they are too complicated a source of protein for baby to digest at this time.

A better choice for baby's first food is homemade first foods. Many packaged baby foods are highly refined and processed (cooked at high temperatures) which can be lacking in nutrients and may cause constipation regardless of whether or not they are organic. In addition, packaged foods may be contaminated at the manufacturing plant with other ingredients such as wheat or dairy or nuts. Sometimes these ingredients such as dairy, wheat or nuts can cause a severe allergic reaction in your child. This slight, seemingly harmless contamination in packaging can occur even in the most reputable brands.

Here are the recommended steps to prepare baby's first food:

1. Buy organic produce for baby's first food and allow her immature digestive system to avoid the challenge of digesting pesticides, herbicides and genetically modified foods.
2. Cook the first food, such as sweet potato (baking or boiling) or butternut squash (baking or steaming) to ensure it is soft enough to puree when finished.
3. When cooked, remove the skin and discard. Remove seeds if applicable.
4. Mash the pulp with a fork or use a food processor to blend fibers and add distilled water (or breast milk) as needed to make desired consistency.

5. First foods should be served at room temperature. Touch the food to the inside of your wrist where skin is more delicate than your tongue to give you a better idea of what is too hot for baby.
6. Bonus: Just before serving express a tiny amount of breast milk (which contains enzymes and good bacteria) into the mashed food to help make a smooth transition into baby's tummy.
7. Bonus: Or in place of mixing with breast milk, you can mix the food with your own saliva by putting the food into your own mouth and chewing a bit. This technique is called pre-mastication and is only necessary when introducing a new food for the very first time. Masticating is the act of chewing food between the teeth in order to mix the food with our saliva, which in turn begins the digestion process. The act of pre-masticating food for baby is the act of chewing or mixing baby's food in your mouth before the food is given to baby mixing helpful digestive enzymes from your mouth with baby's first food.
8. The very first food can be given once a day for the first four days, preferably during the feeding time that falls between 11am and 1pm.
9. The first food should be given after baby has taken a full feeding of breast milk.
10. Most likely your baby will take anywhere from one teaspoon to two tablespoons. This is a considered a full serving and will increase over time. First foods are more about the experience for baby, and can be quite overwhelming to her so small amounts are best.

Why is there so much concern over enzymes you ask? Enzymes are crucial for optimal digestion. When baby is first introduced to foods, she does not have enough teeth to grind and mix the food with the saliva in the mouth. This may cause a limited amount of enzymes to mix with food. Mixing the food with a touch of breast milk brings live enzymes from mother's milk directly into baby's first food. If breast milk is not available, the option of pre-masticating also brings digestive enzymes from Mom's own saliva to the food.

If your first food is organic, and prepared in such an easily digested manner and then mixed with breast milk or pre-masticated, you may reduce baby's risk of constipation. This first food can be given once a day for the first four days, preferably during the feeding time that falls between 11am and 1pm. This is the time of the day when the human digestive system is in "peak performance" and will assist the process of a new food. This also gives you some time if baby has issues with the food and any constipation or colic can be over before bedtime. The first food should be given after baby has taken a full feeding of breast milk. Otherwise baby could overfeed on the new food and become gassy or constipated and have no room for breast milk. Basically, you are topping off the feeding with food. Most likely your baby will take anywhere from one teaspoon to two tablespoons. This is a considered a full serving and will increase over time.

What is the next food to try?

After a starch has been introduced, the next food to be introduced is a homemade organic applesauce at any time *after* the first four days. Baby's digestive system is beginning to mature with the introduction of the starch and she is ready for something more. After applesauce is introduced, you can move through the following food in any order: peas, pumpkin, pears (no skin), prunes, banana and goat kefir (plain only). Here are some important reminders.

1. Introduce each food no sooner than four days apart. This gives baby a chance to show you if she has any reaction to the food and you being able to know what food is the cause.
2. All foods must be cooked, pureed and served at room temperature.
3. At this phase (age), the only raw food baby can eat is banana or avocado, all other foods must be cooked to a soft puree consistency, and served at room temperature. Anything served hot can burn baby's sensitive tongue. Banana can be served cooked or raw, and is acceptable in raw form due to the enzyme amylase contained in the banana. Avocado is easy on the digestive system and often helps lubricate the intestinal tract.
4. Once a food has been introduced successfully it can stay in her repertoire.
5. After the first week of introductions, you will add a second serving time of food, an example if adding what would be considered breakfast time. Then at the third week add to a dinner time. Remember at this stage you are topping off the breast milk feeding with the pureed food.

What is the total list of foods appropriate for ages 4-6 months?

Here is a list foods appropriate for babies, ages 4-6 months. These foods typically are easier to digest over others and have some of the lowest allergic responses.

1. Cooked and pureed apples (organic apples only)
2. Cooked and pureed winter squash (if fall or winter start with this vegetable, otherwise start with sweet potato)
3. Cooked pureed pears
4. Cooked and mashed sweet potato (if spring or summer start with this vegetable and put winter squash in fourth place)
5. Cooked and pureed prunes
6. Cooked and pureed peas
7. Pureed bananas (raw or cooked)
8. Cooked pureed carrots

What might an "allergic" reaction to food look like?

If baby demonstrates an allergic response to a particular food such as a rash on the face, rash on the bottom, gas, bloating, colic behavior such as excessive crying shortly after eating, or constipation remove the offending food until you can further discuss this food with your pediatrician. If baby demonstrates a serious allergic reaction such as shortness of breath, stops breathing or throat closing seeking emergency medical attention.

If at any time, your baby has difficulty chewing a particular food, go back to puree and try that food again in another month.

What should I be looking for to make sure my baby is digesting food properly?

One of the greatest indicators of effective digestion is poop. The change from breast milk poop to food poop is significant, and should not be a painful or unpleasant experience for baby. In order to make sure baby is effectively digesting new foods, baby's poop needs to be passed with relative ease. Baby can bear down, where before he may not have needed to previously, but bearing down should not be a struggle. Baby will give the appearance of moving her bowels, but will do so with ease. If baby bears down to the point where her face turns red, or she cries while trying to go, or spends several tries trying to pass a stool and cannot, baby can be experiencing constipation. Constipation can be a sign that food is not effectively digested.

Another sign of constipation, which escapes most of us, is the quality of the bowel movement. Healthy poop in a baby will have the consistency of toothpaste. The characteristics of healthy poop are important for all of us, not just baby. Stools that are tiny balls, or give the appearance of tiny balls packed together are not optimal stools. When stool is less than optimal it can be a huge indicator that food is not being digested properly and can lead to a host of health problems. For most of us the culprit food is a processed food.

Sometimes the packaging of foods causes foods to come in contact with foods that can cause constipation (cross contaminating foods such as wheat and dairy), as a

result, an unsuspecting food can cause constipation and the real culprit is the way the food was packaged. In order to be absolutely sure if the packaged food or the actual food itself is causing constipation is to make that exact food homemade and give to baby again. If baby suffered constipation when consuming that particular food out of a jar, but does just fine once made from scratch, the chances are high there is something in the packaging and processing of this food that baby's tummy did not like. In the event that all attempts at resolving constipation with this particular food fails, contact your pediatrician.

What should my baby's overall nutritional day look like once I introduce first foods?

Day One-Day Four: Introduce squash or sweet potato *once* in the early afternoon after a feeding and that is all. Keep to your same nursing or bottle schedule.

Day Five: Introduce pureed apples for breakfast, with apples being eaten alone after finished nursing. Continue with the lunch menu of squash or sweet potato. Continue with same nursing or bottle schedule.

Day Six-Eight: Continue with these two foods.

Day Nine: Introduce a third food, but do this at lunch and move the sweet potato or squash to dinner.

Follow this pattern by replacing a lunch food and switching the breakfast or dinner until all foods on the list have been enjoyed with no adverse reaction.

If baby seems gassy or irritable after the introduction of a particular food, take the food out and choose the next food on the list and try the offending food again in two weeks. If the second introduction does not go well, keep this food off the menu until seven months old. And if there is a reaction again at seven months, discontinue this food until two years. Unless the reaction is severe, in that case do not give the food again until you have spoken with your pediatrician.

Do not rush to give baby variety; baby will enjoy each food for weeks. The experience of eating itself addresses all the senses and is stimulating to the brain and to cognitive development. Allow baby to fully experience new food for at least four days before adding another. Just like any other sensory experience baby runs the risk of being over-stimulated if overwhelmed with too many foods. Look at first foods as an experience for your baby, not just the way to fill his belly. Remember his primary nutrition is still breast milk.

Even though you are introducing apple and pear in whole food, avoid any juices including those made from the fruits and vegetables on the list. Fruit juices, especially fruit juices sold in bottles, are high in sugar (even though there might not be any added sugar, juices are very high in naturally occurring sugars), may be contaminated with bacteria, mold and/or yeast. The potential for introducing bacteria and mold into baby's system may be a health risk.

What food do I start with if I waited before starting first foods?

A baby that begins food at four months, or five months versus a baby that begins food at 6 months are *not* on the same schedule. If baby starts food at four or five months, then she has had time to adjust to new foods before advancing to the next stage of eating. But if baby has started eating foods closer to six months, or six and a half months he should wait *beyond* seven months before starting more complicated "seven" month foods and completely introduce all of the foods on the list for 4-6 months.

Again for clarification. Different babies start first foods at different ages, but a baby that begins food at 8 months still needs to complete the first foods under the 4-6 month acceptable food list before moving to the 7-9 month food list.

What is the total list of acceptable foods for 7-9 months of age?

7 Months

After meeting the 7 month marker AND completing the list of first foods for 4-6 months, baby is now ready to try a few more new foods. Your baby is also ready for the next list of foods if the introduction of the first list of foods has gone well with no constipation or other digestive upset. By now your baby has a greater interest in food, and is consuming anywhere from 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon of food at a time. Food continues to be cooked (except noted foods below) and pureed. Meals should still contain only ONE ingredient, prepared simply from whole foods. No additives, chemicals or sugars should be given to your baby, and food should continue to be organic. The following foods can be added to the previous foods:

1. Cooked and pureed apricots
2. Avocado (mashed)
3. Very ripe peaches (peeled and pureed)
4. Goat milk yogurt (plain)
5. Cooked and pureed green beans

6. Cooked pureed carrots

8 Months

The following foods can be added to the previous list of foods once the previous lists are successfully introduced:

1. Mango
2. Kiwi (do not give alone, give with fruit from previous lists)
3. Blueberries (mix with applesauce for the initial introduction)
4. Lentils (yellow or red are easier to digest)

9 Months

At 9 months, your baby's digestive system is maturing and is able to handle TWO ingredients per meal. Although when introducing a new foods, especially grains, introduce only the one ingredient at a sitting for the first few times to improve digestibility. Baby still needs to eat organic as much as possible, most food still needs to be cooked until soft, and food still needs to be served at room temperature. Examples of meals can include quinoa and applesauce, rice and lentils, goat yogurt and pears, mango and kiwi. The following foods can be added to the list of acceptable foods that have been given up to 9 months:

1. Quinoa (Cooked grain)
2. Millet (Cooked grain)
3. Organic brown rice (Cooked grain)
4. Oatmeal (Cooked grain)

5. Cantaloupe (organic)
6. Watermelon (organic)
7. Red or yellow potatoes (Cooked)
8. Onions/Leeks (Cooked)
9. Mushrooms (Cooked)
10. Beans (Begin with navy bean with is one of the easier beans to digest and mix with sweet potato first few times)
11. Egg yolk (Cooked) (cage free)

At 9 months, baby can also begin to experiment with some finger foods such as cut up avocado, cut up cooked sweet potatoes, and soft watermelon. Since baby will be learning how to grasp at food, a great rule of thumb is to occasionally add a finger food to the pureed serving and not as a substitute for a full meal. The following finger foods can be added at 9 months to any meal of pureed food to help baby learn independent feeding and improve developmental skills:

1. Avocado (A great first finger food, cut into small pieces)
2. Sliced banana
3. Ripe pear (If pear is very ripe and peeled, this makes a great finger food)
4. Sweet potato (Peeled, cubed and baked on a baking sheet until soft and cooked) (Serve at room temperature)
5. Ripe peaches (Peeled, diced and very ripe. Peaches should be ripe enough to gum without difficulty)

6. Watermelon (Ripe and soft, taken off the rind and seeds taken out)

Following the introduction of the foods from the first list, and until baby has reached nine months of age, baby can add the following foods:

How should I introduce eggs?

Egg is a wonderful source of protein, and barring any allergic reaction it is a wonderful first food and one of the only animal products that should be introduced in the first year. While there are a number of conflicting ideas about when to introduce eggs, waiting until nine months to introduce eggs can help reduce the risk of allergy by making sure the digestive system contains additional digestive enzymes to digest this food. Even though eggs are protein they are not the same protein as breast milk or brown rice, and therefore should be introduced no earlier than nine months.

Once baby is ready to try eggs, it is highly recommended that eggs be cage free. Pasture fed is improved quality over cage free if you have access or can afford. Cage free means the chicken is allowed to roam free and will feed outside, usually on grass and weeds and small bugs but will also feed on grain feed. Pasture fed is a chicken that only feeds from the outside grasses, weeds and insects. The impact of a chicken's diet that includes grass and weeds and other foods from their natural environment contributes to the nutritional value of the egg. Cage free and pasture eggs can contain more beta carotene and other important vitamins and minerals. They can also contain more lecithin needed to break down the egg. All of these nutritional pluses can make the egg easier to digest and provides a great deal of nutritional value.

Chickens confined to cages can have poor health, poor muscle tone and eat contaminated feed. Chances are the eggs made from caged chickens do not contain the same nutritional value as cage free eggs. When the egg is not as healthy as it should be, baby's immature digestive system may react to the egg as if a toxin or an allergen.

Recently there has been a lot of differing opinions about when to give a baby eggs. Some literature and websites say egg is acceptable as early as four months because it contains protein like breast milk. My personal belief is egg is not the same gentle protein that is contained in breast milk or goat milk. In addition the literature condoning the early introduction of eggs do not take into account the high risk of the egg as an allergen. This risk should encourage parents to wait until baby's digestive system is more mature than when starting first foods, no matter if the egg is cage free or how the egg is prepared.

Preparing egg for baby for the first time involves feeding baby the yolk first. There are three ways to prepare the yolk. The first way is to drop the egg into boiling water and boil for 4-5 minutes. Lift the egg out of the water and let it cool momentarily. Crack the shell and spoon the yolk out. You can feed baby the yolk straight or mix the yolk with rice cereal.

The second way is to crack the cage free egg and separate the white from the yolk. Scramble the yolk in a pan until cooked, but with a slightly wet consistency. Do ***not*** use spray, butter or oil on the pan. Keep the yolk as plain as possible.

The third way is to cook the egg over easy, again without butter or oil, and once the egg is medium, cut out the yolk from the white. Egg should have only a slightly running consistency, not too wet and not too dry.

What are some "meal" ideas for my 9 month old?

Breakfast:

Goat yogurt with finger food pears
Cooked quinoa cooked with touch of pure maple syrup and finger food ripe peaches
Brown rice cereal with finger food banana
Brown rice cereal with pureed blueberries
Cooked millet and finger food peaches
Cooked millet and purred plums
Cooked quinoa or cooked quinoa flakes with pureed mango

Lunch or Dinner:

Brown rice and lentils
Sweet potatoes and navy beans
Quinoa and green beans
Oatmeal and applesauce
Brown rice and peaches
Quinoa and black beans
Brown rice and peas
Squash and applesauce
Oatmeal and peaches
Carrots and avocado
Quinoa and avocado

What is the total food list for 10-12 Months and what else do I need to know at this age?

Baby is able to handle THREE ingredients per meal and is doing more finger foods in addition to healthy, whole food meals such as rice pasta with cut up soft tomatoes and peas, bananas and blueberries with goat yogurt, broccoli with sweet potato and ripe pear. The following foods can be added to the previous foods:

1. Rice pasta
2. Cherries (organic, with pits taken out)
3. Spinach—cooked and pureed (organic)
4. Whole eggs—cooked (cage free)
5. Beets (Cooked until soft, or canned with no additives)

6. Tomatoes (organic) (pureed)
7. Broccoli—cooked (organic)
8. Raspberries (organic)
9. Blackberries
10. Zucchini (cooked)

The following ***finger*** foods can be added to meals:

1. Rice pasta (cut up into manageable pieces)
2. Scrambled eggs (cut up into small pieces) (cage free)
3. Broccoli (cooked until soft and served at room temperature) (organic)
4. Raspberries (organic)
5. Blackberries (organic)
6. Cooked mushrooms (cut up and served at room temperature)
7. Cantalope (ripe and soft) (organic)
8. Mango (ripe and soft)
9. Kiwi (peeled)
10. Blueberries (organic)

What are some "meal" ideas for my 10-12 month old?

Meal Ideas for 10-12 months

Breakfast Ideas: (Continue to feed baby pureed food and soft solids and gradually by 12 months, baby will be eating mostly soft solids independently. Serve soft solids on the side of the pureed food so that baby can eat independently and still be fed with a spoon)

Oatmeal with finger food raspberries

Quinoa with finger food blueberries and sliced banana

Millet with cut up ripe peaches and ripe pear

Banana, mango and blueberries

Brown rice cereal with cut up mango, sliced banana

Sliced banana and goat kefir

Goat milk yogurt and raspberries

Lunch and Dinner Ideas:

Brown rice, lentils and cooked zucchini (Brown rice and lentils pureed with some pieces mixed in, cooked zucchini is mixed into rice until baby is ready to try as a finger food. Must be soft enough to gum)

Scrambled eggs, cooked spinach, and finger food sweet potatoes

Quinoa and cooked green beans (pureed) and finger food cooked carrots

Cooked peas and cooked carrots with Jasmine rice (puree with small chunks or add cooked carrots as finger food is cooked until very soft)

Cooked zucchini, cooked summer squash and brown rice (puree with small chunks)

12 Months

At this point, baby shows greater interest in what the rest of the family is eating, and can handle a little bit more of a table food type of meal. Food still needs to be soft solids and easily "chewed" by the amount of teeth and gums baby has. Meals should be simple in preparation and can contain up to four or five ingredients. Meats should wait to be introduced once baby has first molars. The following foods can be added to the previous foods:

1. Sprouted bread or homemade spelt bread (if you want to try introducing gluten)
2. Strawberries (recommended organic)(watch carefully for potential allergy)
3. Cucumber (peeled/watch carefully for choking hazard)

Avoid these additional foods in the first 18-24 months due to the health risks associated with these foods:

1. peanuts

2. white flour (includes pasta, cookies, crackers and pretzels)
3. corn
4. honey (avoid for first 2 years)
5. nuts
6. grapes
7. citrus
8. soy
9. canola
10. refined white sugar

Contrary to popular opinion with regard to first foods, avoiding meat and dairy in the first 12 months due to the immaturity of baby's digestive system can help avoid hidden digestive problems such as constipation, infrequent diarrhea, bacterial dysbiosis, malnutrition, and protein malabsorption. More and more research links poor nutrition to developmental delays and behavioral disorders. Feeding your baby whole foods and being patient on introducing complicated foods can help baby develop a healthy digestive system and healthy foundation. Ideally, waiting until molars have come in helps increase baby's chance of digesting animal proteins. Just because we can puree a food in a blender does not mean the body can break it down.

When can I give my baby animal meats and how?

Many resources allow animal meats into baby's diet very early, and many pureed baby food includes meat, but the human body was not designed with a blender in mind. Just because we can puree food in a food processor or a blender does not mean it is easy for baby to digest.

The food processor should only be used for speed, not necessity. A food processor is appropriate for soft fruit or cooked soft vegetables. A ripe pear or a banana can be

affectively mashed with a fork, or with a potato masher. Meat cannot be mashed with a fork or a potato masher.

Animal meats should be given only after baby's first molars have come in, allowing baby to chew meat that has been cut and mashed with a fork and knife. When the molars break throw the gum line it is because the pancreas is now manufacturing the enzymes to digest more complicated proteins and fats. It makes perfect sense that the teeth form when the body is able to digest the foods that these teeth are now able to chew. The human body is a perfect design.

While many resources ask parents to wait until about 9 months to introduce animal meats, ask yourself objectively does it make sense that the body can digest foods it does not chew without the help of a machine? Many, many food allergies and many children's food allergies can be the result of a food being introduced before baby can affectively digest the food.

When can I give my baby cow's milk?

Cow's milk is one of the most frequent allergens in this country. My personal view is because most of us are not designed to handle such a complicated food, and introducing pasteurized cow dairy at 12 months is too early. Most resources accept 12 months old to start giving cow's milk, but waiting may be best for your baby, especially if your baby has been prone to colic, digestive upset, reflux, constipation or skin issues which may become worse with the introduction of cow dairy.

In order to gain a different perspective you have to remember that cow's milk is breast milk for a cow. It is breast milk for a cow that is meant to grow a baby calf into a full size cow in a brief period of time. These facts should give most of us pause. The protein chain in cow's milk is too complicated for a human to break down. As a result, many of us are actually cow's milk intolerant and do not even know it. Cow's milk is a complicated protein. Since other proteins like chicken and beef have a greater chance of being digested after the molars have come in, it would make sense to reserve cow's milk until baby can really digest this highly complicated food. For most children this means waiting until the age of two, and for others with sensitive digestive system such as history of colic or constipation or reflux, much longer wait or not at all.

If I wait so long to introduce cow dairy, is there another source of dairy that would be acceptable for my baby?

Goat milk is a wonderful protein source for baby. Its protein chains resemble human breast milk and makes goat milk easily digested. Goat milk is also buffering to the stomach and intestinal tract. Some countries use goat milk to treat ulcers. Goat milk is also rich in medium chain fatty acids, the healthy fat that is important for brain development, heart health and digestive health. Goat milk is so close to breast milk, that in some countries when breast milk and formula is not available, goat milk is the healthy replacement.

When can I give my baby a teething biscuit?

Most teething biscuits are made from wheat or white flour. Unfortunately even wheat has become extremely processed and stripped of most of its nutrients and often becomes the adulterated non-food called white flour. White flour is one of the main ingredients to health conditions such as constipation, diabetes, IBS, celiac, obesity, arthritis, and more. According to the American Cancer Society, colon cancer is the third most common cancer in this country and we can thank processed foods, especially white flour products as a dietary risk factor.

Remember when you made paper mache as a kid. And you made it with flour and water. And it became this wonderful paste that would then harden like a rock. When we consume white flour, the same paste like substance can be generated in our body and can harden in the intestinal walls. If combined with ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup and other chemicals that extend its shelf life that same food does not effectively break down in the body as fast as other whole foods. In the beginning the lack of ease to break down and digest wheat may appear as constipation, but constipation is the at all costs beginning of many health problems. Constipation is the body's inability to eliminate the wasteful toxins accumulated in the body.

Whole wheat flour products that are made with simple and natural ingredients made by reputable companies can be given in moderation, and limited quantity after baby has turned twelve months. Baby will get far more pleasure and nutritional values from other healthier grains such as brown rice, quinoa, millet and oats. When baby turns twelve months, spelt is a much healthier alternative over wheat and can expand baby's

menu to include spelt bread. Spelt contains gluten, but is much easier digested gluten. Baking with spelt is the same as baking with wheat so recipes will convert easily. This way, if you are interested in having some pancakes, muffins and other baked products for baby spelt is a better alternative over wheat. This will also keep you making from scratch and avoid processed and refined carbohydrates in baby's young diet.

What are some meal ideas for 12-24 months?

Breakfast:

1. Banana sliced with blueberries and goat yogurt
2. Goat yogurt with raspberries and banana
3. Cooked brown rice with peaches
4. Cooked quinoa with blueberries
5. Mango, kiwi and peach fruit salad with goat yogurt
6. Cooked Quinoa with touch of pure maple syrup and organic strawberries
7. Oatmeal and pears
8. Melon salad of watermelon, cantaloupe and honeydew cut up small

Lunch:

1. Lentils with rice and cooked carrots
2. Scrambled eggs with diced sweet potato and cooked broccoli
3. Jasmine rice with cooked peas and cooked carrots
4. Avocado with diced Roma tomato (peeled) and rice pasta
5. Black beans, quinoa and avocado
6. Cooked spinach, Jasmine rice and scrambled eggs
7. Peas, scrambled egg and sweet potato (diced)
8. Ezekiel bread with all fruit spread, cut into manageable pieces

Snack: Fresh fruit

Dinner:

1. Zucchini, onion and mushroom with rice
2. Tomato, spinach, avocado and rice pasta
3. Quinoa, sweet potato, and green beans
4. Lentils, potato and cooked carrot
5. Red potato, broccoli, and cooked carrots
6. Ezekiel bread with scrambled egg and cooked carrots
7. Cooked mushrooms, cooked millet and cooked carrots

When should I start to give my baby supplements?

The degradation of top soil from our agricultural practices has made many of our fruits and vegetables lacking in all the nutrients they carried in previous generations. Lack of nutrients, pesticides, processed foods, and lack of cultured foods on a daily basis all make supplementation necessary. So, even if you make everything from scratch, your baby will still need a few supplements with the introduction of food. You can begin to introduce these supplements when introducing first foods, although some of these may be necessary earlier if you are giving your baby formula.

The first supplement to consider is a probiotic designed for infants. A probiotic is a live organism that should never be purchased over the counter, but instead through a health care provider that understands the importance of storing this temperature controlled substance. A good probiotic helps keep digestion smooth and provide ongoing gut flora. Making sure baby's gut flora is plentiful is important for a developing immune system. The gut flora is an incredible and vital part of a person's entire health. The importance of the gut flora is gaining recognition, and soon more and more information will be available to us. Right now, the gut flora is beginning to be known as the 2nd brain, because the gut flora sends messaging to the brain. Since the population of the gut flora contributes to this brain response, it would make the best sense to make sure baby has the most plentiful count of gut flora as new foods are introduced.

The second supplement to consider is a food source of essential fatty acid. An infant DHA would be appropriate as would small amount of cold pressed flax oil. Flax oil contains essential fatty acids. Essential fatty acids are necessary for healthy digestion and

brain development. Adding ¼ teaspoon of cold flax oil once daily to baby's food, such as applesauce, can add a little extra brain food for baby.

The third supplement to consider is Vitamin D drops. Vitamin D is often deficient in nursing moms and baby's need for Vitamin D increases. Vitamin D is also a vital part of our immune system and helps ensure adequate calcium absorption which is essential for healthy bones and teeth.

How will teeth and teething affect my baby's appetite and interest in foods?

When baby begins to teethe she may experience a variety of symptoms. She could experience a sudden lack of appetite. She may also experience constipation unrelated to the food she had been eating regularly without a problem. She may get a diaper rash as the pH of her urine changes. Sometimes the change in baby's digestive enzymes can change stool enzymes and possibly change the consistency of her stool. Teething rashes, on the face or the bottom can also be another frustrating symptom. And baby's gums can feel tender and swollen making the effort of eating a painful experience. Rest assured, teething symptoms are not dangerous to baby and will resolve itself once the tooth has finally broken through the gum-line. If baby's symptoms persist consult your pediatrician.

Why does my baby put her hands in her mouth?

Baby puts her fingers and anything she touches into her mouth for two main reasons. The first reason, baby is developing hand eye coordination, and hand to mouth coordination important for her development.

The second reason is not as well known. Baby also puts fingers and other things in her mouth in order to colonize her own intestinal track with microorganisms necessary for building immunity. It is important to make sure what baby puts into her mouth is clean, but helping to know why she is putting things into her mouth makes the action a little less unsanitary. If you have pets in your home, it is very important that your baby and her immature immune system do not put hands in her mouth after intimate contact with the pet before a hand cleaning.

What should baby do while sitting in her high chair?

Some babies will be content to sit and be fed, but most babies want to be engaged. Their desire to be engaged allows them to further develop hand eye coordination and large motor skills which are a necessary step toward feeding themselves.

Around nine months of age baby can begin feeding herself with her fingers. First finger foods are foods that you would have pureed sometime between four and six months, but now can be given in small pieces for baby to experiment. Foods such as avocado, ripe banana, really ripe pear, scrambled egg; rice pasta (cooked very soft) can be cut up and placed in front of baby. Most of the cut up food placed in front of baby can wind up on the floor, so make sure you are still feeding baby with a spoon while she is experimenting with her fingers.

Once I introduce foods, can I think about weaning or switching to formula?

Once baby starts foods, it can be a relief to some women that all their baby's nutritional needs are no longer dependent on just breast milk. At the same time, breast milk stills reigns superior and is a vital part of baby's nutrition. Baby is still getting many of her digestive enzymes from breast milk, and is getting many antibodies to help control the invaders she comes in contact with. There is nothing as perfect as breast milk to help baby digest her new foods, and help her develop her immune system.

Somewhere between seven and nine months though, you will begin changing the breast milk feeding to come after the solid food serving of breakfast, lunch and dinner. Around seven to nine months you should start to think ahead as to when you want to be finished nursing. Ideally, nursing until baby is two years old provides baby with all the digestive and immune system benefits of breast milk. After two years, the choice to continue nursing is your decision. The true digestive need for breast milk is present until baby's first molars have arrived. Between first molars and the age of two years, baby's immune system continues to be enriched by breast milk. For some women, have the end in sight can help manage their breastfeeding schedule with less stress.

Use your intuition as well to determine the best fit for your baby. Some babies will drop their breast milk snacks once solid food, especially finger food is on the menu. Most babies will want to nurse prior to nap and bedtime even if they have eaten solid food. So, as baby's morning nap disappears you might find that nursing or bottle feed to drop as well. Since this booklet is primarily about first foods, the discussion of breast

milk and formula will be kept only to how it relates to first foods. For more information about your baby's bottle or nursing schedule consult your pediatrician.

What is the future of my new eater?

Your baby is precious and the most important person in your life. What you feed her is so crucial to her development. As baby develops and gains more independence the temptation toward convenient food is ever present in our culture. Babies naturally have a sweet tooth as breast milk is sweet, but this does not mean the introduction of sugar and sugar foods is appropriate. I am continually appalled when I see babies in strollers at the zoo or mall, and parents are given them soda right from the soda bottle. Their bodies do not need it, their brains do not need it, and their teeth do not need it. More and more developmental delays begin happening around the early toddler phase and continue through the toddler years. Coincidentally, this is also where children become picky eaters.

If you are not careful about first food selection, especially as your baby starts finger food you may be creating a picky eater. A diet full of sugars, oils and white flour will destroy taste buds and keep a limited palette in your child. Combined with toddler behavioral changes and the need for independence that your toddler will exhibit is not a good mix. It is important to develop healthy eating habits at a very young age, and then parent your toddler with appropriate boundaries regarding healthy food just as you would any other safety issue. After all, if diet is a relevant part of our heath, an important piece of disease prevention, then shouldn't we parent our children when it comes to eating?