**Following Baby’s Cues**

Here are some signals that show the time is right to begin offering food and how to follow baby’s cues:

* Your baby is able to sit up well on their own, without your assistance. If not, they can be held in arms and fed as a way to support their bodies until they are able to sit up on own in feeding chair or can be placed in chair if parents prefer.
* Your baby is able to turn their head away to refuse the food you are offering.
* Your baby develops a pattern of remaining hungry after the usual bottle/breast feeding.
* Your baby stares at you when you eat or grabs at your food and shows interest.
* Your baby can swallow pureed food, rather than reflexively spitting it out.

**First Tastes 6-8 Months**

These foods are digestible and nutritious: rice, millet, barley, oats, sweet potato/yam, pumpkin/squash, potato, apple, pear, avocado, banana, peas.

If your baby suffers from gassiness or colic, these foods might worsen the problem: beans, peas, lentils, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, onion, milk.

Many foods can be allergenic but the majority of bad reactions are caused by a handful of foods: cow’s milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, nuts, soy, strawberry, wheat.

**Food Storage**

Fresh food will typically keep 3 days in the fridge and up to 3 months in the freezer. Once frozen food has been thawed it cannot be refrozen. Please note that for half eaten or partially eaten meals that they will contain bacteria and should be disposed of. To avoid waste, you can pour a small amount of the food into a separate container and heat up and always add more later.

**Easy Does It – Approach to Introducing New Foods**

Introduce new foods gradually, one at a time, so you can watch for adverse reactions. Each new food should be offered to baby for at least 3 days before you try the next one. It is not recommended to introduce new foods at night as if there is an adverse reaction it will occur in the middle of the night during sleep time. Keep it light – baby’s mealtimes should always be pleasant and engaging where the adults are role modeling proper food etiquette and talking about what the child is experiencing/eating to encourage a positive experience. For example, describing the color, texture, taste type of what they are eating and if they are not taking to it right away expressing something like “I know that must taste really different” and potentially eating it too to show them it can be enjoyable. Keep in mind that meal times are social but also intentional for our bodies nutritional needs for us as adults which should be mirrored when introducing foods to baby. Rather than play a game of airplane to try and make them eat, respond to what baby is telling you and trust that they are getting their nutritional needs met. Also keep in mind that children laughing during meal times can be a serious choking hazard which is another reason to try and stay away from games and keep it simply social with communication. You can offer baby a spoon of their own to hold while you first introduce foods and then as they physically develop (by 9-10 months or later) when they have more dexterity/control they can begin to hold onto the spoon to that is feeding them.

**How Often & How Much**

When your baby is ready to begin solids, offer food just once or twice a day for the first 2 weeks to month. Their breast milk or formula feeding’s will continue to be the primary source of nutrients for your child until they are about 12 months old so try not to worry that they are not “getting enough”. It is important to follow the baby’s lead by respecting and responding to the child and their responses during feeding times just like all other caregiving activities. This means letting your baby decide whether and how much they need to eat in a given sitting. A meal for a 6 month old can range from a couple of teaspoons to a quarter cup. Losing interest, turning the head away, pursing the lips, swatting at the spoon or spitting out food are signs that baby is done eating. It is common for babies to accept a food only after it becomes familiar, and it may take as many as 10 – 15 tries before this happens.

**Babies Need Iron**

The most common nutritional deficiency among babies is lack of iron, which can cause anemia. Some foods are naturally rich in iron and others may choose to supplement with iron drops. The best sources of iron are breast milk, iron-fortified formula, prunes, meat and poultry are great sources and can be introduced pureed soon after baby begins to eat solid food.

**Meal Plan**

Regular text = Introduced at The Baby Vine

**Bold text = Introduced by parents at home**

*Italicized text = Introduced at The Baby Vine and with parents at home*

Week of 6/6: Squash, Rice, **Sweet Potato**

Week of 6/13: Zucchini, Oats, **Potato**

Week of 6/20: Sweet Peas, **Barley**, Millet

Week of 6/27: Carrots, Quinoa, **Avocado**

**7- 8 Months How Often & How Much**

Each month start offering baby an additional daily meal so by 8 months they’re eating solids 3x/day. Continue to let baby eat as much solid food as they like at each meal, preferably a short while after they have finished a feeding of breast milk or formula. This way, the breast milk or formula remains baby’s main source of nutrition and will not be over-hungry or cranky at the beginning of a meal.

**New Foods to Introduce**

Grains & Seeds: amaranth, tapioca root, poppy/sunflower/pumpkin seeds (all ground).

Vegetables: artichoke, asparagus, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, leek, lettuce, parsnip, rutabaga.

Fruits: apricot, blueberry, cherry, cranberry, peach/nectarine, plum (all cooked).

Legumes: carob, green bean, lentils, split peas.

Meat: Lamb, turkey.

**Meal Plan**

Week of 7/4: **Banana**, Amaranth, Green Beans (only 3 this week due to holiday)

Week of 7/11: **Pear**, Lentils, Cucumber, Plum

Week of 7/18: Apple, Turkey, Asparagus, **Blueberry**

Week of 7/25: Peach, Lamb, Prunes, **Parsnip**

**9-11 Months How Often & How Much**

Babies get very good at regulating their food intake if they are not pressured or even coaxed in any direction. Offer your baby a variety of items from different food groups throughout the day rather than worrying about “complete meals” as breast milk or formula will continue to be their primary source of nutrition until 1 year. Once they have had their milk feeding, let them have as much food as they like. When 3 meals a day no longer seems to satisfy baby’s appetite, it’s time to add snacks between meals.

**New Opinions & Self-Feeding**

 You can try offering rejected foods in a new form, such as a spread on bread or combined with other foods, and keep your patience and bland expression. Baby might change their mind again tomorrow or next week, but a disapproving reaction from you may only encourage their refusal. As baby grows, encourage them to try thicker and chunkier textures, while respecting what they are able to handle. At this stage you will use a food processor less and less and a knife for chopping more and more. By the time your baby is 9 months old, they are old enough to start finger foods. At this stage babies are perfecting their pincer grasp and food is the perfect object for practice. Examples can be finely diced cooked vegetables and soft fruit, small pieces of bread with spread or cheese on it, and foods that dissolve in the mouth like oat cereals. Although it is exciting that baby is learning to self-feed, stay close and within sight line of baby while they are feeding as preventing choking is more important than ever.

**New Foods to Introduce**

Grains & Seeds: flaxseed, rice noodles/pasta, rice cake.

Vegetables: beet, bell pepper, celery (cooked), garlic, green onion, onion.

Fruits: blackberry, coconut, date, grapes/raisins, pineapple.

Legumes: lima beans, fava beans, navy/pinto/garbanzo beans, soybeans & tofu.

Meat & Egg: beef, chicken, egg yolk (some say no whites), pork, veal.

Dairy: cheese, yogurt.

**Meal Plan**

Week of 8/8: Nectarine, **Bell Pepper**, Flax, Cottage Cheese, *Chicken*

Week of 8/15: Grapes, Beets, **Yogurt**, *Pinto Beans*, Broccoli

Week of 8/22: Blackberry, Celery, *Cheddar Cheese*, **Pork**, Dry Oat Cereal

Week of 8/29: Pineapple, Green Onion, **Colby Cheese**, *Tofu*, Bread

Week of 9/5: Dates, Tomato, *Feta Cheese*, **Garbanzo Beans**, Artichoke

Week of 9/12: Mango, *Cabbage*, **Fava Beans**, Goat Cheese, Orange

Week of 9/19: **Cauliflower**, Navy Beans, *Egg Yolk (parents wanted to stick to yolk)*, Lettuce, Melon

Week of 9/26: **Brussel Sprouts**, Beef, *Mushroom*, Onion, Asian Pear