

BABY BASICS

Introducing Solid Foods

(NAPSA)—Here's food for thought for many parents: Introducing solid food is not just about what babies eat but how they eat. Babies need solid foods so they can start developing the necessary oral motor skills for chewing, biting and transitioning to more highly textured foods.

"It is important to take your own baby steps when adding solid food to your baby's diet," says Angela Haas, MA, CCC-SLP, pediatric feeding and swallowing specialist. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

Haas explains, "It can take as many as 10 to 20 attempts for your baby to not make a funny face or seem to be spitting out everything you're putting in. Eating is a learned skill that takes practice, patience, respect and a big smile from Mom or Dad with each successful bite."

But what if your infant has already struggled with a food allergy, such as milk? When you have a baby with this condition, the transition to solid food can be even more stressful. "How do I avoid another allergic reaction?" and "How do I make sure the baby's getting enough to eat?" are common questions.

Here are some important things to remember:

1. It's best to wait until your baby is 6 months old to start solid foods; this will allow the immune system to mature a bit more.

2. Introduce the foods least likely to cause allergic symptoms first, such as bananas, oatmeal and applesauce.

3. Introduce only one new food every few days and watch for an immediate or delayed allergic reaction.

4. Allow your baby to get used



Introducing solid food into your infant's diet can be less stressful than many parents fear if you use practice, patience and respect.

to the taste and texture of solid foods, as well as feeding from a spoon. This may take multiple attempts. Avoid force-feeding.

5. Introduce new textures in three stages:

- Stage 1: thin and smooth
- Stage 2: thicker but still with consistent texture (avoid irregular lumps and bumps mixed in with puree)
- Stage 3: finger foods (soft or meltable solids).

6. As the first birthday approaches, solid foods should provide most of your child's nutritional needs.

If you are concerned about allergic reactions but want to start on solid foods, you can check out Neocate Nutra from Nutricia North America. It's a hypoallergenic, amino acid-based, semi-solid medical food you can give to children over 6 months old. The texture is similar to yogurt and it can be eaten by itself or mixed with other foods.

If you'd like to learn more about food allergies in children, visit the Food Allergy Living blog at www.foodallergyliving.net.