

FINGER FOODS FOR OLDER BABIES

Finger feeding is a normal stage of feeding for older babies. The diet of most babies progresses from baby food (or pureed table food) to small pieces of food at around 9 to 15 months of age. When your baby has 2 to 4 teeth and is able and interested in picking up small items with his/her thumb and index finger, it is time to try “finger foods”.

Finger foods are pieces of food that are small enough for a baby to pick up (about the size of a cheerio) and are soft or dissolvable.

FINGER FOODS INCLUDE

CEREAL BREAD GRAIN	Cereal pieces - such as, Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Puffed Rice, Special K Flakes Small pieces of bread, crackers, muffins, rice cakes Noodles
FRUIT VEGETABLE	Ripe soft banana, pear, melon Thin slices of soft apple Fruit cocktail pieces Soft cooked vegetables - green beans, carrots, squash, potato, peas, etc.
DAIRY PRODUCTS	Egg yolks Cottage cheese Cheese - grated or in small cubes
MEAT & MEAT SUBSTITUTES	Cubes of tender chicken, beef, etc. Separated pieces of ground beef Flaked mild whitefish Tofu-cut into small pieces

BEWARE BEWARE BEWARE BEWARE BEWARE BEWARE BEWARE

Hot dogs, vienna sausages, chicken sticks, or seedless grapes are safe **ONLY** if peeled and cut in small irregular-sized pieces.

As your child becomes interested in finger feeding, begin from food you are serving at a meal or from foods you keep on hand. Use a small unbreakable plate or place food directly on the high-chair tray for easy reach.

Babies enjoy feeding themselves more and more as they grow. In addition, there are many positive aspects to finger feeding - it teaches a baby about use of his/her hands, new food textures, and keeps a baby busy while the rest of your family eats! For more information on finger foods, consult [Feed Me, I'm Yours](#) by Vicki Lansky.

Foods Recommended AGAINST as finger foods:

<p>Crisp or hard vegetables or fruit (such as hard apple or carrot) Tough or fibrous meat Peanuts, popcorn, or hard snack foods Hard candy, potato chips or other non-nutritious foods</p>
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FOOD INTRODUCTION

Always introduce one new kind of food or juice every 4-7 days. This allows time to observe whether the baby will tolerate new foods.

Starting Cereal When starting cereal, use rice flakes to which you add formula, breast milk, or warm tap water. After rice is tolerated, you may begin barley and oatmeal. Please do not use wheat or mixed cereals.

Starting Fruits Generally, most fruits are tolerated well; but occasionally fruits, such as peaches, may cause skin rashes. Avoid citrus (orange juice, etc.) until after one year of age.

Starting Vegetables When starting vegetables, start with yellows first, with the exception of corn, then introduce green vegetables, a new one every 4-7 days. Beets may turn diapers red and may simulate blood in the urine or bowel movements. Avoid corn until after one year of age.

Starting Meats When buying meats, purchase pure meat rather than the meat dinners, such as beef and macaroni dinner. Strained meat is about 25% protein while meat dinners are about 5% protein, so you can see you obtain more food value in the pure meat jars. When starting meats, begin with the light-colored meats - chicken, turkey, lamb or veal.

Starting Table Foods Some forms of table foods can be introduced as early as 6-8 months. Mashed or ground fruits or vegetables, fine curd cottage cheese, and yogurt may be given. We recommend using a blender, food processor, or baby-food grinder to puree unseasoned soft-cooked table foods. By doing this, you may by-pass commercially prepared junior foods, if you wish. (See the food preparation sections of Feed Me, I'm Yours or The Mother's Almanac and our guide to Finger Feeding.)

Drinking Juices Try to limit juices to the morning hours, and no more than 4 ounces a day. Large amounts of juices will dampen appetites and develop improper feeding habits. It's best to dilute juice with equal amounts of water - and **PLEASE** do not allow juice to become a major part of your child's diet.

Weaning Try to have your baby off the bottle by 9-12 months. Start introducing the trainer cup at 4 months of age. When you wish to wean from breast, we suggest going straight to a cup (rather than a bottle) if your baby is over 6 months.

Food Consistency Prior to teeth think "dissolvable"; with 4-8 teeth think "semi-chewable".

Think Nutrition We recommend the avoidance of desserts, in baby food jars or otherwise. There is no nutritional value in baby food desserts. Also, avoid any non-nutritious foods or sweets, such as soda-pop (Coke, Pepsi, etc.), tea, candy or snack foods.

Seasoning Infant Food It is not necessary to season with salt, pepper, butter, or sugar when you introduce table foods. Using small amounts of seasonings and flavorings is OK, but avoid large amounts of oil, butter, sugar or salt.

References: The Mother's Almanac by Marguerite Kelly
Feed Me, I'm Yours by Vicki Lansky