Feeding your baby solid foods is an exciting step. It is recommended to wait until your baby is around 6 months of age to start solids. Your health care provider may suggest starting earlier if your baby is showing signs of readiness. WIC does not provide food for your baby before 6 months of age.

Early introduction of solid foods before 4 months of age can:
- Cause choking.
- Cause infant to drink less than the appropriate amount of breast milk or formula.

You will know your baby is ready for solid foods when he or she can:
- Sit up alone or with some support.
- Control head and neck movement.
- Open mouth when he or she sees food.
- Keep tongue low to receive the spoon.
- Keep food in his or her mouth and swallow, rather than pushing it back out.

First Foods
Iron-fortified infant cereal fed by spoon and infant meat are excellent choices for your baby's first solid food.
- Start with 1 to 2 tablespoon(s) of infant cereal mixed with breast milk, formula, or water or 1 to 2 tablespoon(s) of infant meat.
- Throw away uneaten cereal after each feeding.
- Only offer single grain infant cereals such as rice, barley, wheat, or oatmeal. Mixed cereals can be introduced after determining the infant can tolerate the individual grains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD</th>
<th>BIRTH TO 4 MONTHS</th>
<th>4 TO 6 MONTHS</th>
<th>FEEDING TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula</td>
<td>Breastfeeding: On demand 8 to 12+ feedings</td>
<td>Breastfeeding: 5 or more feedings</td>
<td>Babies need breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula for the first year. The bottle is for breast milk, formula, or water only. Growth spurts are times when your baby may drink more breast milk or formula than usual. Growth spurts usually happen around: 2 to 4 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formula:</td>
<td>0 to 1 month: 14 to 24 oz</td>
<td>Formula: 26 to 39 oz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATER</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTRODUCTION OF SOLIDS AT AROUND 6 MONTHS**

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- Only offer single grain infant cereals such as rice, barley, wheat, or oatmeal. Mixed cereals can be introduced after determining the infant can tolerate the individual grains.

**Tips for Starting Solids:**
- Always feed infant foods from a spoon.
- Add one new food at a time. Wait seven days before trying another new food to give your baby time to adjust. That way, if your baby has a reaction you will know which food caused it.
- Homemade baby food is easy to make and saves money. Homemade spinach, beets, turnips, carrots, or collard greens should not be given to infants less than 6 months of age due to high levels of nitrates.
- Your baby will let you know when he is full. Turning head away from food, closing mouth, pushing food away, and slowing down eating are signs your baby has had enough.
- Try to feed your baby when the rest of the family eats. Your baby wants to be a part of family meals too.
- Do not give your baby honey or foods that contain honey!

If your baby does not like certain foods, be sure to keep offering them occasionally. A baby’s taste for food changes frequently.

Note: These guidelines are for the healthy, full-term infant; serving sizes may vary with individual infants. For additional information on infant feeding, please contact your local WIC agency or your infant’s health care provider.
The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and that breastfeeding continue for at least 12 months and beyond.

### Feeding Tips

**IRON-FORTIFIED INFANT FORMULA**
- Iron-fortified infant cereal or enriched hot cereals (4 to 6 Tbsp)
- Dry toast, small pieces of crackers, or dry cereals

**GRAIN PRODUCTS**
- Offer single grain infant cereals such as rice, barley, wheat, or oatmeal.

**JUICE**
- Juice should not be introduced to infants before 1 year of age unless recommended by a health care provider. If juice is recommended, give only 100% juice in small amounts.

**VEGETABLES**
- Strained or pureed cooked vegetables or store bought infant vegetables such as winter squash, peas, green beans, carrots, spinach, sweet potatoes, and broccoli (3 to 4 Tbsp)
- Plain cooked, mashed, or chopped vegetables in soft, bite size pieces (3 to 4 Tbsp)

**FRUIT**
- Mashed fresh or pureed fruits such as bananas, applesauce, peaches, and pears, or store bought infant fruit (3 to 4 Tbsp)
- Mashed or soft, bite size pieces of peeled fresh fruits or fruits canned in water or juice, such as bananas, pears, peaches, and melon (3 to 4 Tbsp)

**PROTEIN-RICH FOOD**
- Well-cooked, plain, strained, pureed, or store bought infant meats or poultry (1 to 2 Tbsp), egg, mashed beans, and plain yogurt
- Well-cooked, chopped or ground lean meats, poultry, fish, egg, mild cheese, plain yogurt, cottage cheese, and mashed beans (1 to 3 Tbsp)

**The following foods are choking hazards:**
- Large pieces of raw vegetables (like carrots, celery, cauliflower, and broccoli)
- Whole grapes, berries, cherries, melon balls, and large pieces of raw fruit
- Foods that clump or are sticky, such as raisins or dried fruit
- Hot dogs, sausages, and tough or large chunks of meat

**Foods to avoid in the first 12 months (these foods contain too much fat and/or sugar):**
- Mixed dinners, bacon, lunch meats, and hot dogs
- French fries
- Creamed vegetables
- Puddings, cookies, candy, and cakes
- Soda, fruit drinks, juice, coffee, and tea

**Things to remember when starting solids:**
- Do not add salt, sugar, extra fat, gravy, ketchup, and spices to your baby's food.
- Refrigerate open jars of store bought infant food immediately and use within 48 hours.
- Heat only the amount of food your baby needs for each feeding.
- Use a small dish for feeding solids. Do not feed directly from the jar.
- Start with a small amount. You can always add more food if your baby is still hungry.
- Throw away any food left in the bowl.
- Use a blender, strainer, or baby food grinder to make baby food. Pre-chewing is not a safe way to offer foods.
- Do not give your baby honey or foods that contain honey!
- By 6 to 8 months of age, give 4 to 6 oz of water daily.
- By 10 to 12 months of age your baby should be eating most foods from the table and learning to self-feed. Expect your baby to be messy while learning.

Note: These guidelines are for the healthy, full-term infant per day; serving sizes may vary with individual infants. For additional information on infant feeding, please contact your WIC office or your infant’s health care provider.

References: