

Infant Feeding and Allergy Prevention - Fast Facts

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1. Solid foods can be introduced to an infant (baby) around six months of age (not before four months), and when a child is ready. If possible, breastfeed infants while giving them solid foods. This advice is for all infants, even if they have severe eczema and/or food allergy, or if a parent or sibling has allergies.
2. Studies show that introducing common allergy causing foods by 12 months of age may reduce the chance of children developing food allergy. These foods include egg, peanut, cow's milk (dairy), tree nuts, soy, sesame, wheat, fish, and other seafood.
3. Solid foods should be in a form suited for the child's age, such as small amounts of well-cooked egg and smooth peanut butter/paste. Giving new solid foods in the day, rather than at night, allows adults to watch the child and respond if they have an allergic reaction.
4. You can start by rubbing a small amount of food inside the child's lip. If there is no allergic reaction after a few minutes, give small amounts of the food. Never smear or rub food on a child's skin, as this will not help to identify possible food allergies.
5. As a guide, you can mix a small amount ($\frac{1}{4}$ of a teaspoon) of a food that commonly causes allergy (such as hard-boiled egg or smooth peanut butter/paste) into a child's usual food (such as vegetable puree). If there is no allergic reaction, gradually increase the amount, such as $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon the next time.
6. Continue to give the foods to the child regularly (twice weekly), as part of a varied diet, to maintain tolerance. Trying a food and then not giving it regularly may result in food allergy development.
7. Even if you follow this advice some children may still develop a food allergy. If a child has an allergic reaction (most occur within minutes), stop giving that food and seek advice from their doctor.
8. If your child already has food allergies, see your doctor for advice, testing, treatment, and an action plan. Children with cow's milk, wheat or multiple food allergies should also be seen by a dietitian to help maintain healthy food intake. Avoiding foods can affect a child's growth and development.

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Content updated June 2023

For more information go to www.allergy.org.au/patients/allergy-prevention and the National Allergy Council Nip allergies in the Bub website www.preventallergies.org.au

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