

Feed only breastmilk or formula for the first 6 months. Baby's digestive system isn't ready for anything else.



# welcome baby! (NOW WHAT?!)

The first six months of your baby's life is a time of "firsts." The first smile. The first laugh. Perhaps even the first tooth. It is also a time in which new and experienced moms alike tend to have the most questions about feeding their babies.

Below is a list of commonly asked questions about what and when to feed babies who are between the ages of 0-6 months:

## What should I feed my baby?

Breastmilk or iron fortified formula meet all your baby's needs for the first six months.

## What about cereal? Doesn't my big baby need more than just breastmilk or formula?

Regardless of size, a baby's digestive system is not mature enough for anything but breastmilk or formula until she is about six months old. Large babies have the same developmental timeline as smaller babies; their digestive systems are still immature and unable to handle solids. They may drink more breastmilk or formula which will provide them with additional calories.

## I fed my other children cereal at six weeks and it didn't hurt them. In fact, my doctor suggested it. What's changed?

New research indicates that introducing solids too early to a baby's immature digestive system can lead to a variety of allergies and food intolerances.

## I'm so exhausted! Will a small amount of cereal in the bottle help my baby sleep through the night?

Babies will sleep through the night when they are ready. Cereal won't help and may be harmful because it can cause a baby to choke.

## How will I know when my baby is ready for cereal?

Isn't it amazing how babies can "talk" to moms before having words? Here are some signs that your baby is ready for more than just breastmilk or formula:

- Good head control.
- Opens mouth when seeing a spoon.
- Accepts food from spoon and moves it into his mouth.
- Uses jaw to munch up and down.
- Uses whole hand to grasp objects.

## reforming an old tradition

"Tradition is engraved in the mind of my Portuguese mother. When I had my first baby, she wanted to mix cereal with milk and feed it to my daughter in a bottle. She said, 'That's the traditional way.'

But my doctor had warned me that a baby's stomach isn't able to digest cereal before six months of age. And that giving her cereal before that time may not only lead to a lifetime struggle with weight but result in future allergies and other problems. I explained this to my mom, yet she worried. She held strongly to the traditional belief that a fat baby is a healthy baby, and my daughter was thin. So she worried.

There are no magic words that solved this problem for me. I repeatedly and reassuringly told my mom that my daughter was growing at a healthy rate. I showed her my daughter's weight and growth charts. I told her the doctor said her weight was perfectly normal. I even counted the dirty diapers so she could see everything was fine. As time went on my mother mentioned cereal-in-the-bottle less often and she seemed to trust my doctor and me.

Tradition is a powerful thing. Although my heritage is very important to me, thinking a heavy baby is a healthy baby is a tradition I don't want to pass on to my beautiful daughter."



Carla and her daughter