

**Hi, Stacy from Semi-Crunchy Mama here.** In this section we're going to talk about:

- helpful nuggets that didn't fit anywhere else

How often should baby eat and when? When I went to my oldest son's 6-month wellness visit, the standard questionnaire said, "Are you feeding your baby 3 meals and 2 snacks a day?" And I was like, "Uh, \*I\* don't eat 3 meals and 2 snacks a day!" My oldest ate 2 meals a day until he was around 2, and my youngest only gets 3 meals because I have to feed his brother anyway. Again, follow your baby's lead and what works for your family.

Your baby may naturally eat less from day to day, and a lot of parents worry about this. Adults do this when we're sick, or it's hot, for example, and it's the same for babies. Hot weather, illness, while teething the excess drool can upset their stomachs, or teething pain makes them not want to chew. While achieving physical milestones they may simply be distracted and busy. My son wanted to run instead of nurse or eat from about 11-15 months old. Didn't starve. Also when traveling they can get over-stimulated and have a hard time eating. My oldest is 4 and still gets thrown off when his grandparents visit us since he's not used to the distraction at mealtimes.

How about transitioning from single foods to meals? The food ideas I list are all single items, so when can you switch to just offering a whole meal? Again, I do suggest starting off a little slowly just to ease into it. You don't need to offer "three square meals a day" off the bat. Food is starting as a snack, so it's bonus nutrients on top of milk. Then you'll eventually look at their diet over the course of a few days or a week anyway, so offering carrots for 2 days in a row isn't detrimental. I know it's an annoying answer, but the timing depends on your baby. Once you feel confident that your baby isn't reacting to foods, and he or she can pick up and eat them, combining them is great.

We often start with "deconstructed" meals, so if we make tacos, baby can have the filling, possibly cheese, avocado, etc., but doesn't get a whole taco in a tortilla. Or I make stir fry, scoop ours out of the pan, keep cooking his veggies for a few

more minutes or add a little steam so they're softer than ours, and serve that. I tend to cook without much salt to begin, and we just add salt at the table.

I mentioned iron earlier, so I put a list of iron-rich foods to offer your baby. Many of these are easy to mash, or make into balls or cakes that are easy for little hands to grab. Again, if you're going for iron specifically, don't offer these with dairy which inhibits absorption, and do add vitamin C rich foods like citrus, berries, broccoli, peppers, etc.

I get a lot of questions about offering water. I'm SUPER PRO BREASTFEEDING, guys, I still nurse my 4-year-old twice a day. Yes, your breastmilk is 70-80% water, it is the perfect first food for your baby, it's miraculous stuff. I still suggest starting water with solids. Remember when your baby was a newborn like 4 seconds ago? Babies drink, pee, sleep, and suck their thumbs in utero, but they don't poop until (hopefully) they're out. It's new, it feels weird, and that's why newborns hate pooping so much. They've never had to process fiber before and it can be tough on their tiny tummies. Water helps lubricate all that. I'm sure you've read some horrible internet clickbait about water toxicity being dangerous, which is true, but that's mostly in relation to giving water in place of formula or milk, or watering down formula to save money. It's incredibly sad, but it's not the same issue. The recommendation is not to offer more than one "feeding" worth in a day, so 4 ounces, maybe 6, to prevent filling up baby's tummy with liquid. We often start with binding foods, so water helps everything keep moving. I started both my kids with a regular bottle like they got breastmilk in. Some babies who get frequent bottles may be upset that it's not milk inside, though. Next we go to a straw cup. We skip sippy cups since they aren't great for maxillary development. I like the ZoliBot straw cup since it has a thin silicone weighted straw and handles, but it is plastic and can leak a bit. Since we only use them for cold water, it doesn't bother me. You can also try an open cup or a 360 training cup, whatever works for your baby!

Speaking of which, what about dealing with constipation? Constipation in babies isn't just "not pooping," it's hard-to-pass, pellet-like stool. All babies will have changes to the texture and consistency of their poop, but constipated babies

aren't fun for anyone. Many people will start suggesting a bunch of foods to help baby poop, but I suggest another approach: less food. If baby is breastfed, back off solids a bit for a day or two. Make sure you're offering 1-2 ounces of water per meal. Limit binding foods like bananas, grains, applesauce, and dairy. See how that works first. Then try offering more fruit like prunes, pears, and peaches. Raisins and sautéed mushrooms work well, too.

Just a heads up, speaking of poop: you will know how much your baby is eating based on what comes out, and you'll become a diaper detective. If you cloth diaper, you'll want to invest in a diaper sprayer if you haven't already. Fun fact - did you know that you're supposed to flush ALL poop, regardless of whether you use cloth or disposables? True story.

Anyway, some foods may surprise you on their way out. Bananas, a baby favorite, have those tiny fibrous strings on the sides, which, in poop, can look like little black worms. They're not parasites, it's just banana. Blueberries can make for purplish black poop. Red beets, a great naturally sweet food, has water soluble color which means that you may find magenta or dark red evidence in a diaper. If you forget, it can look alarmingly like blood. Watermelon and grapefruit also make for reddish stool. Consider yourself warned!

Next, we'll just wrap it all up!

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