

HOW-TO

Introduce your tot to new foods

Switching to solids can be simpler than you'd think.

At around 4 to 6 months old (and with your pediatrician's OK), your little one will be ready to begin exploring the world of solids, per the American Academy of Pediatrics' guidelines. But the milestone doesn't have to mean detailed meal plans or time-consuming purees. Keep it manageable and stress-free with a few foolproof guidelines.

Offer foods you like

What should baby eat first? Tiffany Otto Knipe, MD, founder of Washington Market Pediatrics in New York City, advises starting with foods that you like to eat. "Your goal is to have a child who will sit at the table and enjoy meals with the family," she says. "If you hate carrots, don't start with those." You may have heard that if you start with fruit, your child won't touch vegetables, but Knipe says that's just an old wives' tale. Babies often have an affinity for sweet foods the same way adults do, but that doesn't mean they'll refuse anything else.

Let baby be the boss

Your munchkin might not finish everything on her plate, and she might end up with more food on her clothes than in her belly—it's no biggie. "For most babies under the age of 9 months, the main source of calories and nutrition is still breast milk or formula," assures Knipe. "Follow your infant's lead. If she looks away or stops opening her mouth for more bites, the meal is over. Don't force it." By letting your tot call the shots, you're allowing her body to regulate what it needs, which lays a good foundation for healthy habits as she grows.

Give it another chance

Just because avocado didn't receive a rave review during its dinnertime debut doesn't mean your kiddo will forever shun guacamole. "Most children need to be exposed to a food multiple times before accepting it—sometimes as many as 10 to 12 times," explains Knipe. "So if your child does not seem to like a particular food the first time it's introduced, just try it again some other time." One way to improve a food's appeal: Let your little one observe you casually consuming it. According to Knipe, "If your child watches you enjoying your food and mealtime, she is likely to enjoy the experience, too."



None of your beeswax

The only food that's off-limits for the 12-months-and-under crowd is honey.



DO SOME GOOD

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