

Feeding Advances: Starting Purees

Offering purees is a good way to make your son/daughter's diet healthier and more diverse. This handout will explain when your son/daughter is ready to try purees and provide tips on how to offer pureed food successfully. It will also explain normal behaviors when offering purees and when you should ask for help when feeding your son/daughter.

WHEN IS MY SON/DAUGHTER READY TO TRY PUREED FOOD?

Your son/daughter is ready to try **pureed food** (soft foods that have been blended or cooked until soft and creamy) when he or she:

- Is at least 4 months old
- Weighs double (twice as much) his or her birth weight
- Can sit in an infant seat or highchair and hold his or her head up without becoming tired
- Shows behaviors that say he/she is interested in food, like staring at food, reaching for food, smacking his/her lips and opening his/her mouth when he/she sees solid foods

WHICH FOODS ARE OKAY TO OFFER?

Breast milk or formula should still be the main source of nutrition for your son/daughter.

In addition to breast milk or formula, you can offer the following foods to your son/daughter:

- Baby cereal that is fortified with iron (has iron added to it)
- Stage 1 pureed fruits and vegetables. (*Stage 1 purees are the thinnest purees available.*)
- Pureed proteins, like meat and beans

Did you know?

Your son/daughter doesn't need juice in his or her diet. He/she can fill up on juice before eating more nutritious foods. It can also cause your son/daughter to have diarrhea, a rash or gain extra weight.

HOW CAN I SUCCESSFULLY OFFER PUREED FOOD TO MY SON/DAUGHTER?

You can successfully offer pureed food to your son/daughter by following these tips:

- **Start by feeding your child once a day.**
- **When your baby is trying new types of food, offer only 1 new food or ingredient every 3-4 days.** This makes it easier to figure out if your son/daughter prefers certain foods. It can also help you figure out if he/she is allergic to certain foods.
- **Remember that babies begin by having small portions.** In the beginning, it's normal for a baby to only eat 1-2 tablespoons of food at a time.
- **Offer foods with a single ingredient.** For example, offer oatmeal instead of multigrain cereal.
- **Use an infant-sized spoon with a shallow bowl.**
- **Make sure your son/daughter is sitting in his or her chair properly.** The highchair should be supportive and your son/daughter should be sitting with his or her legs, head, back and feet supported.
- **Make sure your son/daughter can look straight ahead at the person feeding him or her.**
- **Watch your son/daughter's cues.** Wait for him/her to finish a bite before offering another. It might take time for him/her to coordinate movements between bites.
- **Watch for signs of fatigue or tiredness.** It's important that your son/daughter doesn't become frustrated while eating.

WHAT IS NORMAL BEHAVIOR WHILE MY SON/DAUGHTER TRIES PUREED FOOD?

Your son/daughter might show different behaviors while you are offering pureed food.

The following behaviors are normal while offering pureed food:

- Tongue thrusting (sticking his/her tongue in and out)
- Messiness, including spitting out some pureed food
- Making faces or grimacing
- Preferring some flavors over others
- Lip smacking
- Mild gagging

WHEN SHOULD I ASK FOR HELP WHILE OFFERING PUREED FOODS?

You should call your son/daughter's pediatrician if he/she shows any of these signs while trying new pureed food:

- Gagging when he/she sees pureed food
- Gagging after you show him or her purees multiple times
- Consistent coughing or gagging
- Consistently refusing food
- Showing signs of acid reflux (heart burn or upset stomach), like arching his/her back while eating or crying while eating
- Showing signs of an allergic reaction, like unexplained diarrhea or stools with excess mucus, vomiting, rash or hives or trouble breathing

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT FEEDING PUREED FOOD TO MY SON/DAUGHTER?

Here is some helpful information about your son/daughter's nutrition while he/she is trying pureed foods, like the importance of iron and cautions about nitrates:

Iron

It's important that your son/daughter gets enough iron so he or she can grow properly and be healthy. Babies who were born full-term can have low iron levels by the time they're 6 months old. Babies who were born pre-term can have low iron levels by the time they're 2-3 months old.

Choose foods that have a lot of iron in them, like meat or beans. This will help add iron to your son/daughter's diet.

If you're breastfeeding, it's important that you continue to take prenatal vitamins so your son/daughter gets enough iron.

Nitrates

Nitrates, a preservative in certain foods, can be harmful to your son/daughter's health. This is especially true with some homemade foods because vegetables naturally collect nitrates as they grow in soil. Make sure to rinse off vegetables before pureeing them.

Nitrates are not a concern with jarred baby foods. This is because jarred baby foods are tested for safe nitrate levels before they are sold in stores.

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Down Syndrome Program

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