

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