

Myths about starting solids

MYTH: Baby has reached a “magic” weight.

Just because your baby achieves "x" number of pounds, or has doubled birth weight, does not mean that baby is automatically ready for solids. The World Health Organization recommendations for 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding have no exceptions for heavier babies. The maturity of the digestive tract and developmental readiness make the difference, not baby's weight.

MYTH: “Your baby is big so you need to start solids.”

Some mothers are told that since baby is big, they won't be able to produce enough milk to satisfy baby. This is quite untrue - almost all mothers have the ability to produce enough milk to exclusively breastfeed twins and even triplets. If you allow your baby to nurse on cue, your body will make enough milk for your baby.

Other mothers are told that baby is eating too much, so mom should reduce baby's intake by limiting nursing and/or starting solids. There is absolutely NO evidence that a large breastfed baby will become a large child or adult, and limiting nursing can be quite dangerous – baby needs your milk to grow his body & his brain.

MYTH: “Your baby is small so you need to start solids.”

Ounce for ounce, breastmilk has more calories than most baby-safe solid foods and significantly more nutrients than any type of solid food that you can feed your baby. In addition, starting solids will quite possibly reduce the amount of milk and calories that baby is getting overall, rather than increase overall intake.

MYTH: “Feeding solids at night will help baby sleep through the night.”

This is an old wives' tale that has no basis in fact. Two studies found no difference in sleep patterns of babies who received solids before bedtime when compared to babies who were not given solids. Younger babies will often sleep worse due to adverse reactions to the solids (stomach ache, gas, constipation, are not uncommon).

MYTH: “After 4 months, baby needs more iron than breastmilk can provide.”

Breastmilk does have less iron than formula, but the iron in breastmilk is better absorbed than the iron in formula or cereal. The current research indicates that a baby's iron stores should last between six and twelve months, depending upon the baby. At that point, extra iron can be obtained from small amounts of solids.

MYTH: “If you don't start solids by ‘x’ months, then baby will have problems accepting solid foods.”

This is no evidence that this is true for normally developing, healthy babies. There is limited evidence that babies who have been tube-fed long-term or have serious developmental delays may have problems learning to eat if solids are not introduced between 6 and 10 months.

For more information and references, see www.kellymom.com/nutrition/solids/