



Dr. Julia Gonen, N.D.  
7 hate'ena street  
bnei atarot 60991  
p: 050.933.6004  
e: julia@gaianaturopathic.com  
[www.gaianaturopathic.com](http://www.gaianaturopathic.com)

## FOOD INTRODUCTION FOR INFANTS

### When do I first introduce foods to my infant?

For the first 6 months of life breastmilk is the only food required by healthy infants. Premature infants normally thrive on breastmilk as it provides essential antibodies that protect their immune function and nutrients that optimize growth. A nursing mother needs to be sure her nutritional needs are being adequately met to produce high quality breastmilk to properly nourish her rapidly growing infant. Generally, an additional 500 calories daily (of good quality nourishing foods – not ice cream!) should be added to the diet to meet the demands of lactation.

### My pediatrician recommended I feed cereal to my baby before 6 months, why not?

Until approximately 6 months of age, a baby's digestive tract is not able to adequately digest most foods. The introduction of foods too early may induce food allergies or food sensitivities. Furthermore, it has been conclusively demonstrated in a Finnish study that prolonged exclusive breastfeeding will significantly reduce the incidence of food allergy and intolerance, even in families with a strong tendency to allergy.

### How do I know if my baby has food allergies/sensitivities?

Conditions that commonly result from food allergies/sensitivities include upper respiratory infections, ear infections and gastroenteritis. A baby is usually ready for solid foods when s/he is able to sit up and is able to push food away. New foods should be introduced one at a time for a week to see if there is any reactivity.

### Symptoms that may indicate reactivity to a food include:

- Rash around mouth or anus
- Hyperactivity or lethargy
- Runny nose
- Skin reactions (hives)
- Infection
- Diarrhea or mucus in stool
- Constipation
- Allergic shiners (dark circles under eyes)
- Redness of face, cheeks
- Ear infections

### Which foods should be introduced first?

It is important to begin introducing foods which are organically grown, hypoallergenic, iron-rich, easy to chew, and contain adequate fiber and fluid for the health of the colon. It is



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recommended that vegetables be introduced before fruits, so that infants don't come to expect sweets at their meals. Sweet potato is highly recommended as the very first food to introduce as the taste is supposedly similar to breastmilk.

### **What are the top nine allergens?**

The top allergens identified are peanuts, tree nuts, soy, dairy, wheat, sesame, eggs, fish, and shellfish. These foods should be introduced last.

### **Why are organically grown foods so important for my baby?**

Organically grown foods are important for everyone. This is especially so for pregnant and nursing mothers as well as growing babies. Organically grown foods are what humans ate for millennia until the recent advent of chemical pesticides. Conventionally grown foods contain traces of pesticides which your baby will ingest. Children's developing immune, central-nervous, and hormonal systems are especially vulnerable to damage from such toxic chemicals.

### **Which foods are most important to eat only organic?**

Once your child starts eating solid food, certain items should be purchased organic as often as possible, due to the higher levels of pesticides, hormones, or antibiotics found in conventionally grown versions. They include meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy, as well as apples, bell peppers, celery, cherries, imported grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, potatoes, red raspberries, spinach, and strawberries.

### **How do I introduce new foods to know if my baby is sensitive/allergic?**

Foods should be introduced one at a time. Non-allergic foods should be rotated every four to six days to minimize sensitization that may occur when the same foods are eaten once or twice daily. During this time period, observe your baby for signs of allergy or intolerance, such as skin rashes, diaper rash, runny nose, watery eyes, mood changes and changes in stool.

### **How do I prepare my baby's first foods?**

The first foods offered to your baby should have a consistency just slightly thicker than the breast-milk or formula that s/he is accustomed to. Vegetables and fruits should be steamed and pureed with water or breast milk in the beginning. As your baby gets older and more used to eating food, you can adjust the consistency accordingly.

Always watch your baby when s/he is eating. Ensure that the food you offer is soft enough and the pieces small enough so that your baby does not choke. Make sure your baby is in an upright position for eating. If anyone in your family has a severe allergy to a specific food, check with your Naturopathic Doctor before introducing it to your baby.



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**What if my baby refuses to eat one of the newly introduced foods?**

Babies and toddlers can be very picky eaters. They may love something one day and then refuse it the next. Don't give up! A recent study showed that it may take up to 10 exposures to a food to achieve acceptance by the child. Thus, it is critical for parents to understand and be patient. Failure to appreciate the normal course of food acceptance may lead to the premature conclusions that a child dislikes a certain food.

**Is it important for us as a family to also eat healthy?**

Most definitely yes! Data suggests that opportunities to foster healthy eating habits in children are present from the earliest point in development -- in utero. It was reported that flavors consumed frequently during pregnancy and lactation are more readily accepted by the infant. This means it is up to you to eat well during pregnancy, lactation and as a family in order for your precious new baby to enjoy a healthy well nourished life.

Teaching and modeling proper nutritional habits from infancy (even better in-utero) can have a lifetime impact on the health of your child. Healthy eating habits can offer protection against many common diseases such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, allergies, asthma and immune dysfunction. If you are unsure about what foods are healthy for you or your children please consult with your Naturopathic Doctor.

**FOOD INTRODUCTION SCHEDULE FOR INFANTS**

	<b>Fruits</b>	<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Grains</b>	<b>Protein</b>
<b>6 Months</b>	Prunes Cherries (peeled) Bananas Applesauce Pears Apricots Grapes (peeled) Diluted juice of any above fruit	Carrots Broccoli Cauliflower Yam Sweet potato Green peas Squash Avocado Diluted juice of any above vegetable	Brown rice cereal	Breastmilk
<b>9 Months</b>	Papaya Blueberries Raspberries Blackberries	Artichoke Cabbage String beans Chard	Millet cereal Oatmeal Brown Basmati rice	Lima beans Split peas Egg yolk Tahina (whole is



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	Nectarines Peaches Cantaloupe Watermelon Pineapple Kiwi fruit	Kale Asparagus Brussels sprouts Parsley Spinach Beets	Rice milk	best) Finely ground flax, pumpkin, sesame seeds Lentils Chick peas Organic yogurt (goat's & buffalo) Nutritional yeast
<b>12 Months</b>	Citrus fruits Strawberries	Tomatoes Eggplant	Rye Wheat (sprouted is best) Soy milk	Egg white Goat's milk Organic cheeses All beans Tofu Thinned nut butter Chicken Lamb Fish Ground nuts and seeds

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