

35. Feed the way your child can eat

How do you know when to start solid foods?

How do you know when to feed your baby table food?

How do you know when to wean her from the breast or bottle?

Babies learn to eat step by step. Many babies are ready to start eating mushy foods from the spoon at age 5 to 6 months and are ready for soft, easy-to-eat family food by age 8 to 10 months. Others aren't ready to start solids until months later and only start eating family food when they are 12 to 18 months old. Move at your baby's rate. Don't get stuck on any one step. Remember that faster isn't better, slower isn't worse.

	WHEN YOUR CHILD...	SHE IS READY FOR...
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuddles <input type="checkbox"/> Roots for the nipple <input type="checkbox"/> Sucks	Nipple-feeding from the breast or bottle
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sits up—alone or with support <input type="checkbox"/> Opens her mouth for the spoon <input type="checkbox"/> Closes her lips over the spoon <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps most of the food in her mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Swallows	Nipple-feeding from the breast or bottle Step 1 food: Mushy food that you feed from the spoon
	<input type="checkbox"/> Picks up food but can't let go <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps food in her mouth instead of swallowing right away <input type="checkbox"/> Moves the food to her jaws <input type="checkbox"/> Munches the food	Breastmilk or formula from the nipple or cup Step 2 food: Thicker, lumpier food that you feed from the spoon
	<input type="checkbox"/> Closes her lips around the rim of the cup <input type="checkbox"/> Picks up food, puts it in her mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Bites off food <input type="checkbox"/> Chews <input type="checkbox"/> Gags some but doesn't choke (if she's gagging she can breathe)	Breastmilk, formula or juice that you give her from the cup Step 3 food: Small pieces of soft finger food and foods she bites or gums off
	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses her fingers to pick up food <input type="checkbox"/> Can chew and swallow <input type="checkbox"/> Takes an interest in the family meal	Whole pasteurized milk from the cup Step 4 food: Easy-to-chew and easy-to-swallow table food