

Introduction to Solids for Babies with an Unrepaired Cleft Palate



Your baby has established bottle feeding. It is time to consider the next steps. An infant born with cleft lip/palate can have solids introduced around 6 months of age.

Rules for Starting Solids

- Signs your baby is ready to start eating solids:
 - Baby sits without support
 - Baby has head control
 - Baby opens mouth and leans forward when food is offered
- Offer foods with a spoon with your baby in an upright seated position.
- Recognize food may escape from your baby's nose. The baby may sneeze out the foods. This is nasal regurgitation and is not dangerous. With practice, the baby will likely adapt and better control solids.
- Do not decrease milk/formula volume until instructed by a doctor.
- Unlike bottle feeding, no special spoon/equipment is required.



Recommended First Foods

- The recommendation is to only breast (or formula) feed for the first six months of life.
- Start by introducing:
 - Single grain cereal cooked and blended with breastmilk or formula
 - Pureed/mashed soft fruits (banana, avocado)
 - Cooked and pureed vegetables
 - Cooked and pureed single meats, poultry, or beans
- Space new foods out by three days to identify potential allergens.

Starting Cup Drinking

- Babies with an unrepaired cleft can try cup drinking at the same time as other infants. Try open cups or cups that don't require suction.
- A surgeon may not want bottle feeding right after surgery. Trying cup drinking can be helpful.
- Babies should be encouraged to drink from a cup at 6 months of age. Try to slowly stop the bottle by 18 months of age.
- Provide small trials of water or breastmilk/ formula. Babies older than 6 months can have 4-6 ounces of water per day. Volume is not important – the goal is to gain skill!

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