

## TRANSITIONING TO SOLIDS

For the first 5 to 6 months of life, your baby will get all their nutrients and water from breast milk or formula.

Currently the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend the introduction of solid foods at 6 months of age together with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age, or beyond.

### IS MY BABY READY TO EAT SOLIDS?

- Is your baby 6 months or older?
- Can your baby support his/her head on their own and sit upright when supported by you or furniture?
- Does your baby have an interest in food when you are eating or reach for your food?
- Does your baby open its mouth when you offer food on a spoon?

If the answer is yes, your baby may be ready to transition to solids.

### HOW CAN I HELP MY BABY TRANSITION TO SOLIDS?

During meals, good positioning is critical for keeping your baby safe and comfortable.

Without good positioning, it is near impossible for your baby to eat properly and there is a high risk of choking. Imagine if you were to slouch back in a chair and have your head hanging over to one side or down low. Now try to swallow. This is what it is like for your baby if they are not positioned well.

### ALLOW YOUR BABY TO PRACTICE SELF-FEEDING

It is important that you allow your baby to practice self-feeding as this will help to develop their independence, hand eye-coordination, and strengthen the small muscles in their hands – needed for later years when they are learning to dress themselves and use a pencil.



## TOP TIP

Once your baby has begun successfully moving the food with his whole fist into his mouth, help encourage this by isolating 1 or 2 small pieces of food to allow him to try and use his thumb and forefinger to pick it up or take it from your grasp



### GOOD POSITIONING SIGNS TO LOOK FOR:

- **Head, shoulders and neck should be very stable, without having to be propped up with pillows**
  - This means your baby's airway is open and food can be easily directed down the right way
- **Feet supported by some type of footrest when eating**
  - Footrests help provide your baby with core stability
  - Without a footrest, it requires so much more focus to sit up and concentrating on learning a new task like eating is difficult
- **Arms should be able to move about on their own with hands ready to grab onto the tray to steady their torso**
  - This allows your baby to lean, reach and grab pieces of food for self-feeding
  - Your baby can use their body language to communicate and tell you if they want more – e.g. lean forward

### STRATEGIES FOR MEALTIME

- **Use a highchair:** This provides support for your baby's head, feet and back and familiarises them with being seated at the table
- **Include your baby at family mealtimes:** This teaches your baby how to eat and helps your child develop social skills
- **Limit distractions:** Avoid letting TV, videos, mobile phones, other children or pets distract your baby from eating or distract you from focusing on the task.
- **Use a splash mat:** Because...well, you know why!

## MAKE IT A SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Yes, it's ok to play with food! In fact, it's encouraged

Playing with food is a great way for your baby to recognise and learn about different textures and flavours.

By allowing your baby to get messy and explore food through their senses, they will be more willing to try new foods later.

This is because the touch of sticky foods dampens down the early sensitivity in newborns to touch. Willingness to eat food depends on recognising a food as 'safe to eat'.

The more your baby sees the whole food that they are being given, the more likely they are to later recognise what they taste as a food that is safe.



## Did you know?

The more scents a baby experiences, the more they are likely to accept new tastes because the taste of a food is very much determined by its smell.

### Don't forget.....

- Always supervise your baby during mealtimes
- Make sure your baby isn't overtired before feeding
- Be sure to check the temperature of food before feeding it to your baby
- You may have to try a new food several times before your baby accepts it
- If you have any concerns with your baby's introduction to solids be sure to seek medical advice