

Solids

NAVIGATING THE INTRODUCTION OF FIRST FOODS IN INFANTS COPING WITH REFLUX/LARYNGOMALACIA: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. (PLEASE NOTE AT NO TIME SHOULD THIS REPLACE ADVICE FROM A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL). THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN FOR THE GRSNNZ NEWSLETTER JUNE/SEPT 2016.

Is there just too much information out there but not enough practical advice? Perhaps new research can provide some much-needed perspective. However, we, as parents, know our children the most and we should trust our 'mothering instincts' about what is right and what works for our kids and not have to crumple from the immense pressure of social media/new age thinking and responsibility.

The first argument I came across was that of the traditional spoon-feeding approach vs baby-led weaning. Why not both? Studies have identified premature infants do best with a spoon-fed approach as their development may be slightly slower than those born at term[i] and I have found this to be true, especially as one of my children suffered with Laryngomalacia and struggled with textures and still does. However, my other child transitioned through various textures quickly, though during periods where her reflux worsened, she would backtrack to only tolerating puree foods. Through supportive advice from professionals, we also always provided the opportunity to have textured foods too. Doing this in a more relaxed environment with less pressure proved largely successful. For example: meals of puree/soft food were provided in a highchair or at the table and was expected to be eaten (mostly); whereas pieces of soft pear or baby puffed rice crackers was offered on a bathmat on the floor was eaten, or not, at their discretion. [ii] This approach ensured that adequate nutrition was provided whilst there is occasion for attempting texture-based food, thereby fulfilling expected stages to aid in reaching developmental goals.



I won't lie it isn't always an easy road. We had times where they were on strike and lots of mess as food was spat out or little speedy hands caught you unawares. Mostly distraction was our main tool, sometimes it meant toy cars fighting on the high-chair tray whilst pulling faces and some exciting music. But if it's about losing the battle to win the war then what is the big deal over trying to get them to eat lumpy food off a spoon? When in life do we have to accomplish this feat? What's wrong with giving them puree to fill them up and they can work out their little munching muscles on the piece of bread, an easy cracker, or a soft-boiled piece of carrot? Just as long as they do have the opportunity to experiment with a variety of textures throughout the day. (See example menu below.) New research backs this up too; solids progression doesn't have to be via spoon. [iii] Given that our babies have great gag reflexes, finger foods are best kept safe, easy to handle, sizes.



Another argument that is raging at the moment is that of when to introduce allergens. Old advice was to wait up till a year, especially if there was a family history of allergy to particular foods. New research suggests introducing known allergens as early as four months, with having been exposed to all types by eight months[iv] (note honey should be excluded till 12 months). Readiness for solids still needs to be considered and the Ministry advises the introduction of solids at six months and not before four months. [v] However, we can take from this that trialling a wider variety of foods before 12 months could have great long-term benefit. If you suspect, your

child has or is at risk of reaction then the best advice I have come across is introduce a new food every three days or so (and talk to your doctor) and lunchtime is usually the least stressful and safest time of day.

As a side note, foods that we found helpful to avoid were those high in acid like tomatoes and citrus, curries, and dishes high in fat. Please refer to our website for further information on this. [vi]

After reviewing multitudes of research and hearing lots of personal experiences I found personally; absorb the information, look at what best suits your child, your personality and your family, and once you know which way you are heading try your best to let go of the pressure of responsibility, the confusion of all the advice out there and the stress about what might happen or what struggles you do face. We can't change what does happen, all we can do is to try and make the best of it and enjoy as much as we can.

A point of safety from <https://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/starting-solids>: "Babies and young children can choke quite easily so feed them only while they are seated and always stay with them while they eat."

SAMPLE MENU
Breakfast apple and cinnamon porridge (soaked the night before if you need super purée) milk drink
Morning tea canned or steamed pears soft boiled egg or soft-boiled carrot easily dissolvable crackers like the peckish brown rice crackers plain biscuit that crumbles easily
Lunch pumpkin and sweetcorn with chicken puréed with bread pieces purée apple to follow
Afternoon tea puffed baby rice crackers banana
Dinner purée carrot, broccoli, lamb, and rice followed by purée fruit
Milk drink before bed
<i>Please note this is only a sample menu to give an idea of how you can mix purees/mashed foods with finger foods / self-feeding. Please alter to include age-appropriate foods and variety in your child's diet and foods that are suitable for their nutritional needs (and any restrictions).</i>

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REFERENCES:

[i] Introducing solid foods using baby-led weaning vs. spoon-feeding: A focus on oral development, nutrient intake and quality of research to bring balance to the debate - <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nbu.12191/full>

[ii] <http://nourishednutrition.co.nz/the-importance-of-messy-eating/>

[iii] http://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/2.3_Understanding_and_Managing_Extreme_Food_Refusal_in_Toddlers.pdf

[iv] <http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/allergy-prevention/ascia-guidelines-for-infant-feeding-and-allergy-prevention> , <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2553447>

[v] <https://www.healthed.govt.nz/system/files/resource-files/HE6014-Starting%20Solids-WEB.pdf>

[vi] <https://www.cryingoverspiltmilk.co.nz/feeding/>