

Why early introduction of solids is not recommended

- Can increase the risk of infections and the development of allergies¹.
- Can increase the risk of being overweight and obese¹.
- A baby's renal and gastrointestinal functions are not sufficiently developed to be able to cope with solid foods¹.
- Babies do not possess the motor skills to cope with solids. Their skills at this stage are largely confined to sucking and swallowing, making it physically difficult for them to cope with other textures.

Tips to help parents delay the introduction of solids

- Give advice on why solid foods should not be introduced before 17 weeks and reassure parents that milk is more appropriate than food at this stage even if the volumes are large.
- Suggest increasing the milk volume at each feed, or the duration of the feed if breastfeeding
- Suggest increasing the frequency of feeds
- If formula feeding and using whey based formula, suggest changing to a casein based formula to help satisfy a hungrier baby.

Here are some useful points of information for you to pass onto parents:

DON'T

- Don't rush. Weaning is a gradual process so don't worry if your baby isn't always interested in trying new foods.
- Don't worry if your baby rejects a new food at first – try again on another day as it can take up to 15 attempts before they will accept some flavours.
- Don't place too much importance on the amount of food that your baby eats as long as they are growing well. Food intake will usually vary from day to day and from one meal to the next.

DO

- Do introduce foods when your baby is happy and alert – mid morning is usually a good time.
- Do look for the cues that your baby will give you to show that they are full, such as closing their mouth and turning their head away.

The infographic includes a photograph of a smiling woman feeding a baby with a spoon. The baby is sitting up and looking towards the camera.

¹ Department of Health. Report on Health and Social Subjects 45 Weaning and the Weaning Diet. London: HMSO, 1994.