



## **Solid Foods & Cleft Palate**

*Is it safe for my baby to start solid foods before palate surgery?*

Yes! Like all babies, a baby with a cleft can begin taking solid foods at around 4-6 months of age. Check with your pediatrician about when and how to introduce solid foods to your baby.

*What are signs that my baby is ready for solid food?*

Your baby should be able to sit up well with little support and be showing interest in your food.

*What should I feed my baby?*

Begin slowly, add one new food at a time waiting one week in between.

**4—6 months:** Iron –fortified infant cereals.

**6—8 months:** Pureed fruits and vegetables, pureed or finely chopped meats and poultry, finger foods, soft crackers and toast.

Source: Annie Boekelheide, NP, UCSF, review of best practice



**9—12 months:** Start cup drinking and increase finger foods.

***How do I feed my baby solid food when the cleft is still open?***

- Start with thin cereal.
- Your child should be sitting up and with feet on a flat surface.
- Stand above your child so his/her chin is tipped up when you offer the spoon.
- Use a small spoon and turn it over inside the mouth and drag it along the tongue applying pressure.
- If your baby is not ready (coughs or chokes), wait a week and try again.

***How can I avoid problems?***

- Like with milk, food may come through your baby's nose. This is not something to worry about. You can use a soft, damp cloth or napkin to wipe inside the cleft if you see some food stuck inside.

Source: Annie Boekelheide, NP, UCSF, review of best practice



- Always keep an eye on your baby when he/she is eating in case of choking.
- Avoid hard foods and other foods which can cause choking in children under 4 years of age; hot dogs, popcorn, whole grapes, nuts, hard candy, lollipops on sticks, potato chips, hard crackers, hard cereals and raw carrots.
- Since choking is common in children, talk with your pediatrician about CPR classes and about how to address choking with your baby.

**Other Solid Food Questions:** If you have questions about the timing and type of food your baby should be taking, check with your pediatrician.

Source: Annie Boekelheide, NP, UCSF, review of best practice