



My baby is delving into the world of solids—what do we need to know about introducing nuts into his diet?

A: In January 2017 the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) issued a major change in the clinical guidelines for introducing peanut-containing foods to infants. The latest findings show that early introduction is a critical defense against developing a life-threatening peanut allergy.

At 6 months of age, your baby is just starting solids and is showing signs that he is developmentally ready to eat with a spoon or self-feed with his fingers. At this time the introduction of peanuts in his diet is not for the nutritional benefits provided by the food itself but to reduce the risk of developing a peanut allergy.

Once your baby has eating figured out, introduce 2 teaspoons of smooth natural unsalted peanut butter to his meal about three times per week. Add it to applesauce or cereal thinned with breast milk, or slowly add 2 to 3 teaspoons of hot water until well-blended. Remember, nut butters are sticky, so don't offer peanut butter directly from a spoon. Instead, mix it thoroughly into a meal. Of course, one should never give a baby whole peanuts, which can be a choking hazard.

Once that's established and no signs or symptoms of an allergy are apparent, experiment with other nut butters, such as cashew or almond. Make your own batch in a high-power blender, and store it in the refrigerator for the whole family to enjoy. As your baby grows, you can finely grind walnuts, hazelnuts or any nuts/seeds combination in a coffee grinder and sift for any chunks, then blend it in your baby's favorite yogurt, fruit or veggie puree.

If you have concerns or if your child is at high risk of developing peanut allergy, the NIAID encourages preferred testing for peanut sIgE or a skin prick test be conducted in a health care setting you trust (like the office of your pediatrician, dermatologist or other specialist). Proceed with introducing peanut-containing foods based on the test results either at home or during a supervised feeding in the office.

—**ELEANA KAIDANIAN, RD, CDN**, host and founder of Pregnant Island (pregnantisland.com), an annual pregnancy and new parent event on Long Island, New York, that takes place this year on May 6

What is the best way to talk to my baby?

A: Start talking to your baby on day one. Language development starts very early in life, even during the first few months. The more you speak to your baby, the better. No matter what language you speak, as long as your baby is hearing properly spoken words on a daily basis, he will develop good language skills. Some "baby talk" is inevitable because your baby will of course be your cutest chat buddy, and you'll want to make him smile and laugh. But, make sure you also speak to him like an older child who can talk and respond to you.

Talk to your wee one about anything and everything. Talk about your day, talk about what you are doing at that moment, tell him a story, describe your environment, ask him questions (even though he can't answer, it's good for him to hear you), and talk to him about anything else you can think of. Start reading to your baby early on; a good time to read is at bedtime, but you can read to him anytime. You can also sing and recite nursery rhymes.

Your baby will get used to the sound of your voice and find comfort in hearing whatever you have to say.

—**TANYA ALTMANN, MD, FAAP**, practicing pediatrician who founded Calabasas Pediatrics in Los Angeles and author of *Baby and Toddler Basics: Expert Answers to Parents' Top 150 Questions* (American Academy of Pediatrics, February 2018)