

10 tips for deciding whether your baby is ready for solids

1. Your baby was born at full term and is six months or 180 days old – time to start solids.
2. Your baby was born preterm and is at least four months past the date which is the midpoint between your expected due date and the premature birth date and showing signs it is ready for complementary foods (tips 4-10). Never delay solids for longer than 7 months after the premature birth date.
3. Your baby has doubled its birth weight.
4. Your baby is still hungry after breastfeeding. Make sure they are completely emptying your breasts each feed. If that's the case and your baby is still hungry, it's a good sign they need some solid food to complement your breastmilk.
5. Your baby is able to hold its tongue in its mouth. In the first few months the tongue has a tendency to stick out (extrusion reflex) and this is great for suckling. But until your baby can hold its tongue in, it's not ready for solids.
6. Your baby has developed the reflex to move food to the back of its mouth and swallow. This means it will not immediately spit food back out of its mouth when fed with a spoon.
7. Your baby's body has developed sufficiently to deal with the actions needed to eat, for example it can sit up alone and support its head and neck and move its arms around while sitting.
8. Your baby shows an interest in food, for example it may reach out and try to grab what you are eating.
9. Your baby is able to express eating related emotions. Instead of simply crying when it is hungry your baby may start to lean forward when it wants food and turn its head away when it is full.
10. Your baby is over four months (120 days) old and is exhibiting signs that they are ready to begin eating solid foods (tips 4-9). While Australian guidelines recommend waiting until six months, guidelines in some European countries recommend introducing solids a bit earlier if the baby shows signs of physical readiness. Talk to your doctor if you think your baby is physically ready to start solids before six months.

