



When can babies eat eggs, wheat or nuts

BABY CARE

ARTICLE

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Did you know? Guidelines have changed for when to introduce your baby to eggs, wheat, fish, and foods containing peanuts. Offering your baby these foods early, from around six months of age, may actually help prevent food allergy.

Food allergy is more often found in children than in adults. In one report in North America, approximately 5% of children under the age of five were noted to have a food allergy.

For many years, healthcare professionals recommended that some of the most common allergy-causing foods (including soy, wheat, eggs, fish, tree nuts, shellfish, cow's milk, and peanuts) should not be included in the diets of babies until at least one year of age. For certain foods, the advice was to wait until the age of two or three. However, this practice of delaying the introduction of foods known to cause allergies may have contributed to the rise in cases of reported food allergies.

New thinking

In recent years, recommendations have changed and scientists have discovered that, when your baby is developmentally ready, there is no need to wait before giving these foods to your healthy baby, once they have started complementary feeding. Studies have found that delaying offering babies allergy-causing foods, beyond six to 10 months of age, may increase the risk of food allergy. It has been suggested that introducing these foods early, and eating them regularly in small amounts, may help your baby's immune system better tolerate some of these foods, and help prevent allergic reactions.

New guidelines recommend giving peanuts (ground, in age-appropriate texture) and foods containing gluten to healthy babies around the time you start complementary feeding. Whole peanuts should not be given to babies or children younger than four years because of the risk of choking. Gluten is found in foods made from wheat, rye, and barley—for example, breads, pasta, cereals, and crackers.

If your baby has eczema, a family history of allergy, or any current food allergy, be sure to speak with your healthcare provider before introducing potential allergy-triggering foods.

Wait and watch

Offer your little one their first taste of these foods individually, then wait a couple of days before trying another, so that you'll be able to identify if a certain food causes a reaction. Cow's milk is not recommended before the age of one year, although other dairy products, such as yogurt, can be offered after six months of age.

Sources

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