

# ABCs

OF Growing  
Healthy  
KIDS:  
FIVE-MONTH-OLD



Your baby is gaining more body control and is eager to move around and explore. Babies at this age are no longer happy to just sit quietly and look around. They are generally cheerful and energetic and interested in everything. Sitting up, playing, babbling, touching things, and moving around help your baby learn about the world.

## FEEDING YOUR FIVE-MONTH-OLD

By now, you and your baby have probably begun exploring the exciting world of solid foods. If you haven't added a solid food—like infant iron-fortified cereal, for example—now may be an excellent time to start! Your baby has probably developed in many ways signaling she is ready for the challenge of solid foods. She sits up with support and may open her mouth for her bottle or a spoon of food as it nears.

So, how do you introduce solid foods to your baby? One at a time! It is important your baby “meet” each food separately while you watch her response to the food. Try one new food every five days, and check for any reactions like stomachaches, diarrhea, rashes, or wheezing. If there are no problems, try another food in five days. If your baby has a reaction to a food, avoid this food until you have a chance to talk with your doctor.

What if the baby dislikes a new food? Take “no” for an answer, and try it again several days later. If he still refuses it, take his word for it—everyone dislikes certain foods! You may want to try the food again in a couple weeks to see if his opinion changes. Not only do you want to slowly introduce the number of foods your baby eats, you'll also want to slowly increase the amount and texture of solid food in the baby's diet. Start out with one cereal-feeding daily and work up until she is taking two meals daily, for a total of 1/3 to 1/2 cup. By this time, your baby will probably be six to eight months old and ready for stiffer, lumpier cereal. You and your baby are slowly and steadily working toward the goal of enjoying meal time with table foods and the entire family eating together.



## WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A FIVE-MONTH-OLD?

- I can recognize my name.
- I can reach for and hold objects.
- I can stand firmly when held.
- I watch your mouth and try to imitate you when you talk to me.
- I may cry when I see strangers.



## IS BABY “HELPING” WITH HIS FEEDING?

Although this is a good sign, it can make feeding a challenge. One tried and true suggestion may help. Use two spoons—one for you to feed with and one for the baby. The work your baby is doing will help develop his skills, but it will be messy. Children learn a lot about food from touching (and tossing!) it. Their “food play”

is an important part of their development, and it helps them accept new foods and textures.

At this age, you should continue to depend primarily on greater quantities of breast milk or formula to make up most of your child’s feedings. Until your baby is well established on table foods (which is not for a few more months), she will need mostly breast milk or formula calories—not solid food calories.

## BABY TEETH

Does your baby have a pearly tooth or two yet? Although teeth “show up” in different babies at different ages, it’s not too early to start caring for them now—even if they aren’t showing yet! Your baby will get used to the idea of dental and mouth care early if you start now by cleaning her gums with a clean damp washcloth or gauze pad after each feeding.

This practice will help ensure that your baby has healthy teeth and a sparkling smile in the years to come.

From tooth care to food texture, all of these topics are important in the growth and development of your baby. Although this time of transition is a challenge, it is also an exciting time for you and your baby.



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*All children grow, learn, and develop at different rates. The information in this brochure is considered typical for children of this age. If you do all you can to help children grow and develop now, they will have the best chance to do well in school and in life.*

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