



**boober™**

introducing  
solid foods  
to baby

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# all you need to know about introducing your baby to solid foods

Introducing your little one to solid foods is an exciting process—so many new textures and flavors! But how do you know when to start? What foods are safest? And how might it affect nursing?

Here at **boober**, we get these sorts of questions all the time, so we've compiled a complete guide to introducing your baby to solid food. Of course, you should always consult with your pediatrician first to make sure your baby is ready to start trying solid foods and to help you figure out what will work best for you and your little one.

Keep in mind: Introducing solid foods is a slow process. The purpose is to teach your baby to new tastes and textures, not to immediately provide full nutrition. (In these early days, that should still be coming mostly from breastmilk or formula.) Early food experiences set the stage for lifelong eating habits, so over the next six months, focus on expanding your baby's palate—and enjoy the time bonding.

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## when are most babies ready for solids?

The American Academy of Pediatrics **recommends** exclusively breastfeeding/bodyfeeding for the first six months. Before you try introducing solids, clear it with your pediatrician. If you're nursing and you wish to continue, you are going to want to think of solid foods as a supplement to breastmilk, not a replacement.

Most agree that if you haven't already begun introducing solids, you should start to do so by seven to nine months, as your baby will have an increased needs for vitamins and minerals. There are some people who believe you can fully breastfeed for the first year. Ask your pediatrician what they recommend, if you need more guidance.

## why do I need to wait until my baby is at least six months?

An infant's digestive system is meant to digest breast milk or something similar, like formula. Before six months, babies usually lack sufficient saliva to break down and digest foods, and they also lack certain enzymes (like amylase), which are needed for digesting complex carbs. Babies can't digest certain fats before six months either, meaning many foods would just pass through their systems undigested and end up in their diaper.

Babies under six months also have underdeveloped throat muscles. The tongue-thrust reflex prevents baby from choking on foreign substances, but as long as that's still present, they are not ready for food.

Another consideration is that small babies lack the ability to control head to turn away from food. While your baby can disconnect from your breast/chest or a bottle, they may not be able to tell you they're full.

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This can lead to obesity later in life. (In fact, **early feeding** is associated with adult obesity, respiratory problems, and food allergies.)

Finally, if you are nursing, a too-early introduction to solid food will often lead to a reduction in milk production and is likely to cause early weaning.

However, you are the best expert on your baby and some babies may be ready to try solids before 6 months. Check in with your pediatrician if you or your baby is ready a bit earlier.



## what signs should I look for in my baby to know they're ready?

In addition to being at least six months (in most cases), you should wait for the following:

- Weight: twice birth weight (usually encouraged, but not absolute)
- Can sit up unsupported
- Has good neck and head control so baby can turn away from food
- Does not show the extrusion reflex when you put a spoon in baby's mouth. (If the food comes right back out of the mouth after trying a few times, baby is not ready.)
- Baby seems to want significantly more breastmilk or formula than you are giving
- Can bring an object in their hand right to their mouth
- Shows interest in others eating
- Baby may become fussier in middle of night, where before baby mostly slept through the night Or baby's sleep periods become shorter.

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## which foods should I start with?

The first food you introduce should be very unlikely to cause allergies and should be easily digested. Good options include avocado, banana, sweet potato, or a whole grain like oats, barley, amaranth, etc. While rice cereal has long been most popular in the US, recent information on arsenic levels in brown rice has encouraged other grains. You can easily make your own grain cereal, or use a commercially available option, but make sure to choose a whole grain.



## okay, my baby is ready for their first solid feeding. what should I know?

Once your child's pediatrician has given go-ahead, you're ready to give it a try! Start in the morning or early afternoon, when your baby's mood is pleasant. (This timing also allows any type of allergic reaction to occur earlier in the day.) Make sure your baby is not too hungry, so they're not easily frustrated or clawing for the breast/bottle.

The amount of food consumed at first will be tiny. The purpose of this first feed is to introduce eating as a concept, not to provide real nutrition. If you're making purees, make sure the consistency is close to liquid. It should really almost slide off the spoon. Add water or breast milk (which is more nutritious and your baby is already used to its flavor) to the food mash or puree.

Get your baby seated and position yourself comfortably across from them. Offer lots of smiles, *mmms* and

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yays as you put the spoon on your baby's lower lip and let them taste. Or you can even use your finger. Offer the food again, if baby spits it out. Gagging or repeated refusal to try the food should be interpreted as a sign that they are not ready. No problem—wait several days and try again.

Overall, you should never push a baby to eat. Signs baby's finished eating include turning away from food, spitting food out (whereas before they were eating it), or starting to act fussy.

If you're interested in trying the self-feeding approach or what's known in England as "**Baby-led Weaning**," you can ditch the pureeing and freezing and spoons altogether. Just offer your baby suitably sized pieces of fresh, nutritious food and let them explore eating. The most important thing to be aware of if you use this self-feeding approach is to avoid choking hazard foods like whole grapes. A **recent study** showed that this method of feeding does not increase the risk of choking.



## new foods, new poop :)

Once your baby starts eating solids, it's natural to notice changes in your baby's poop, including a stronger more "poop-like" odor, different colors, and either less or more. Avoid shaming your baby by making disgusting sounds when you change their new diapers.



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## what should I watch out for in terms of allergies?

In order to minimize the chance of an allergic reaction, use a 3-5 day rule (some pediatricians recommend just a shorter waiting period. Talk to your pediatrician for guidance). Here's how it works: Introduce only one new food at a time and then wait 3-5 days. During that period, you can and should feed your baby foods you've already successfully introduced. Just don't feed the new food type (or other new foods) during that time period.

Introduce only one food at a time—don't mix food—so if there's a problem you know what the culprit is. Watch carefully for signs of allergies, including hives, wheezing, swelling, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. If anything is out of the ordinary, call your pediatrician.

For many decades, doctors and allergists told people to avoid introducing their infant to certain foods with high allergy profiles (like peanuts, shellfish, etc.). A few years ago that thinking shifted toward **introducing allergens** early on, to reduce the likelihood of your child becoming allergic to certain foods.

## what about choking hazards?

Choking is a big problem in the U.S. because many people try to feed their babies too early. To prevent this, never leave your baby unattended during mealtime and keep them seated upright.

Keep food pieces small enough that even if your baby doesn't chew it, the food won't become lodged in the throat and can be swallowed whole. Avoid foods like whole grapes which are roughly the size of a baby's windpipe. Give your baby only a few bits of finger food at a time. Make sure you learn **CPR** and choking prevention skills, and refresh them every year. Don't allow baby to watch a screen while eating.



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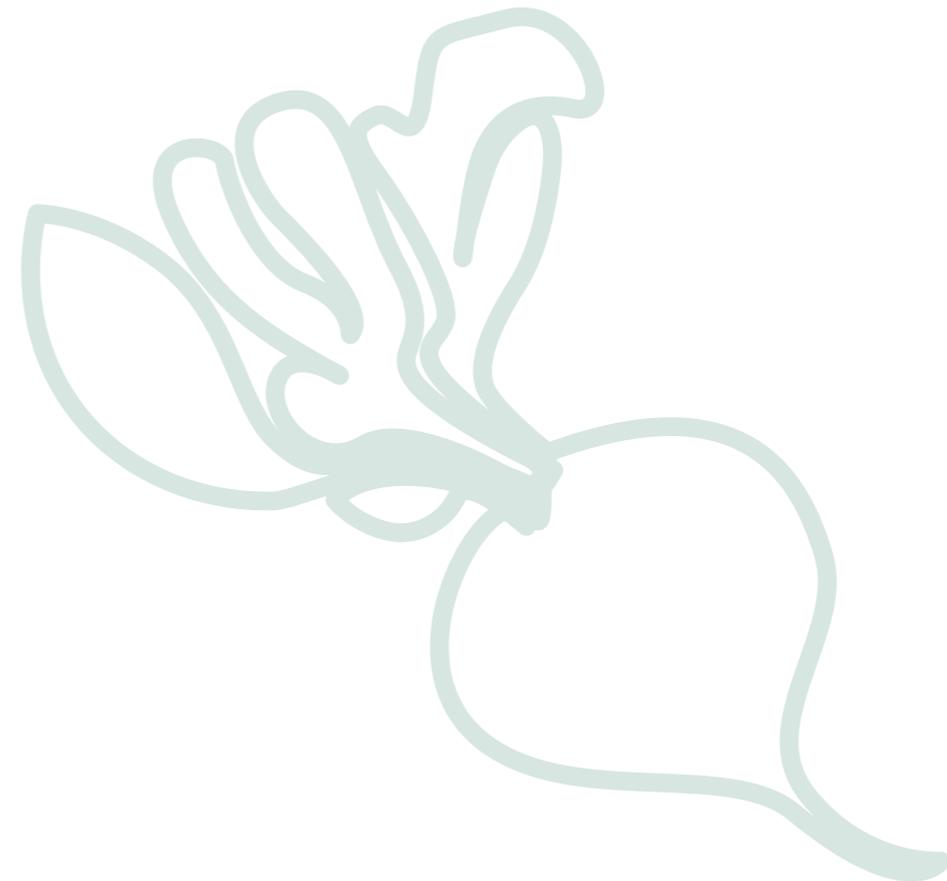
## what foods are healthiest?

Opt for only whole, natural solid food, including whole grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy, eggs, nuts, seeds, legumes, meats, and fish. Fresh foods are ideal. When you don't have time to make your own, try frozen cubes, pouch food, or **jars of organic baby food**, with no sugar or salt added.

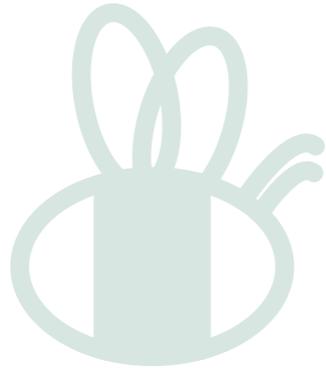
As your baby gets attuned to eating more complex meals, you can feed your baby a meal that includes a ground whole grain and a mashed vegetable with vitamin A (like a carrot) mixed in. You can change this up a lot. A recent **study** showed that part of the reason why many children don't eat foods like dark, leafy greens is because they were never (or rarely) exposed to those flavors early on. Don't assume because they reject a food once that they won't like it. Plan to offer a food up to 10 times before you decide baby really doesn't like that flavor!

## offer new foods multiple times

Don't assume because they reject a food once that they won't like it forever. Plan to offer a food up to at least 6-10 times and know that some babies need to taste a food a whopping 15-20 times before you decide baby really doesn't like that flavor!



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## what foods should be avoided?

Do not give a baby cow's milk until age one or older (and if/when you do offer cow's milk, it should be whole). The AAP still advises not giving **honey** to your baby until age one, but otherwise people are encouraged to **feed "allergenic foods" early** and to watch carefully for signs of reaction. Up until a few years ago, parents were advised to avoid peanuts until age three, but recently **new evidence** came to light and the **current recommendation** is to expose your child to peanuts from six months of age on, depending on your family history. Again, talk to your pediatrician.

According to the AAP, fruits and vegetables (besides avocado and banana) should be cooked (so that they're less of a choking hazard and more digestible) until your baby is about eight months old.

## what are good options for the first few foods?

Good first foods include:

- avocado
- banana
- sweet potatoes

Give baby one meal each day of single food during the intro period—the same food you gave for the first meal (no more than one tablespoon of food before it's mixed with water or breast milk). There should be no lumps and it should be only slightly thicker than breastmilk.

You can offer a little water after baby finishes in bottle or sippy cup. Once you think your baby seems hungry enough, you can try adding a second small meal. After the first few weeks, once your baby seems into it, you can feed first and then finish with breastfeeding or bottle.

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## things to consider in the 2nd feed and beyond



- Vary foods as often and as much as possible.
- Offer a dark leafy green, not just fruits as they are naturally ‘sweet’; may be tricky to introduce veggies after.
- Flavor bridges:
  - begin with breast milk or formula as familiarity bridge;
  - previous foods can be used as ‘dips’ or spread on toast, mixed with yogurt etc.
- Eat with baby. More accepting if see parent eating.

Six-month-old babies can consume between two and six servings of food per day. (A serving is defined by as much as baby will eat in one sitting—often one to three oz as they get older.) Typically babies this age should be nursing at least five times a day or drink 32 oz of milk.

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## what else should I know about mealtimes?

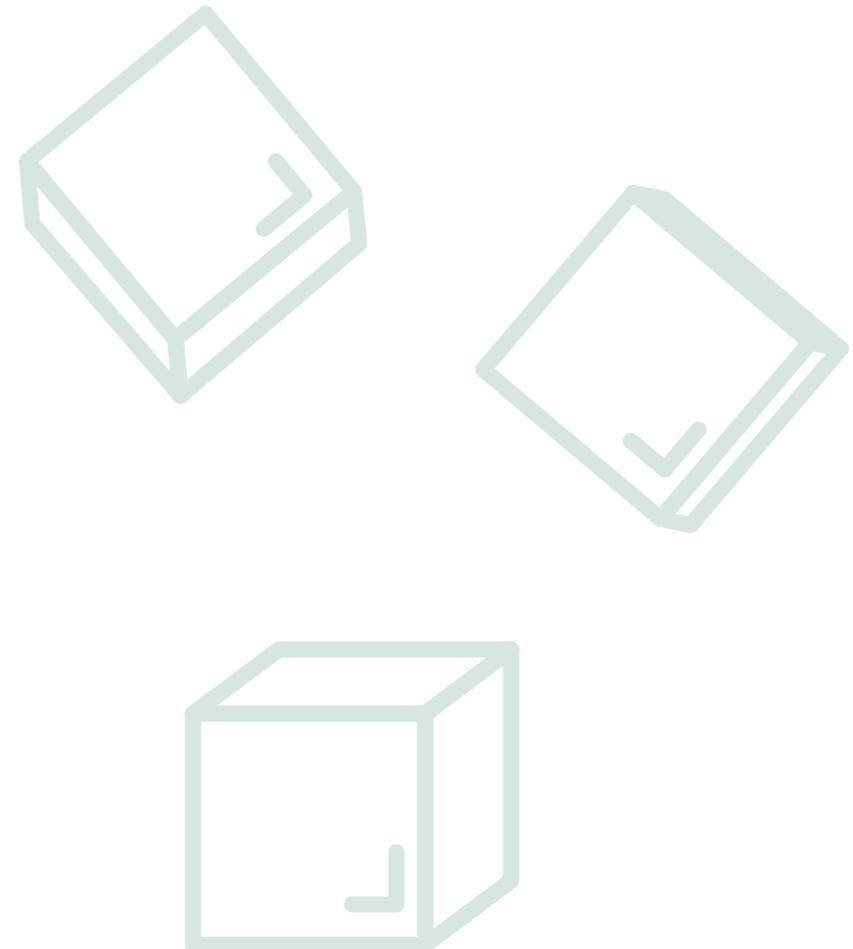
Mealtime should be fun and happy! Don't look at it as a chore; see it as time to bond, love, and nurture your baby. It's also a way to set a foundation for a lifetime of healthy attitudes toward food.

Eating is an important learning process. Allow for major messiness, including food tossing. Self-feeding helps your baby's hand-eye coordination, dexterity, and intellectual development. Allowing baby to freely self-feed shows them that you have confidence in their abilities, which increases their confidence and feelings of independence. Self-feeding babies eat slowly, but don't worry: They do eat enough. Eating also teaches cause and effect (ie: "When I lean the cup, liquid comes out. When I drop my spoon someone picks it up.")

Don't react negatively to your baby throwing food. That only reinforces the behavior, since your baby likes the reaction and will do again. Keep a poker face!

## what equipment do I need if I want to make my own baby food?

- A small food processor or spice grinder
- Ice cube trays
- Small glass jars with lids
- Freezer storage bags
- Cold storage travel bag and ice packs



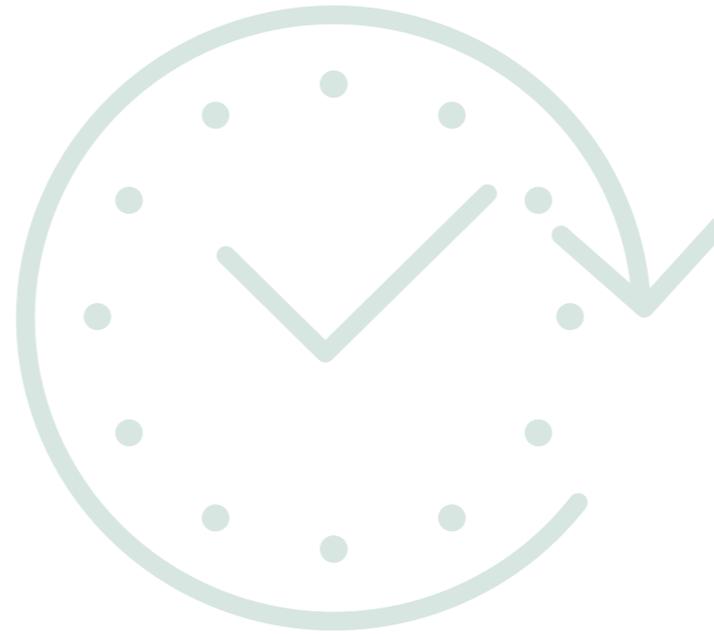
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## how should I store the food, and how long does it last?

In the fridge, veggies and grain cereal last two to three days. Technically, once your baby has eaten part of a serving of food, you should throw the rest out, since saliva can lead to bacterial growth.

Using the frozen food cube method can help you avoid having to make baby food daily. Just steam or boil your veggies (in very little water, steaming retains most nutrients). Then place the food in a food processor, puree, and spoon into ice cube trays. Once frozen, release the cubes from the tray, and place them in heavy-duty freezer bag. Suck any air out of the bag and make sure to label and date the plastic bag.

When you're ready to use the cubes, warm them on the stove or in the microwave (but carefully test the food to avoid any scalding parts). You can also thaw it in the fridge overnight. Just don't just leave them out at room temperature to thaw, since that can cause bacterial overgrowth. Or make your grain mush and add a frozen veggie cube when hot! It'll melt and you'll have a complex meal for your baby!



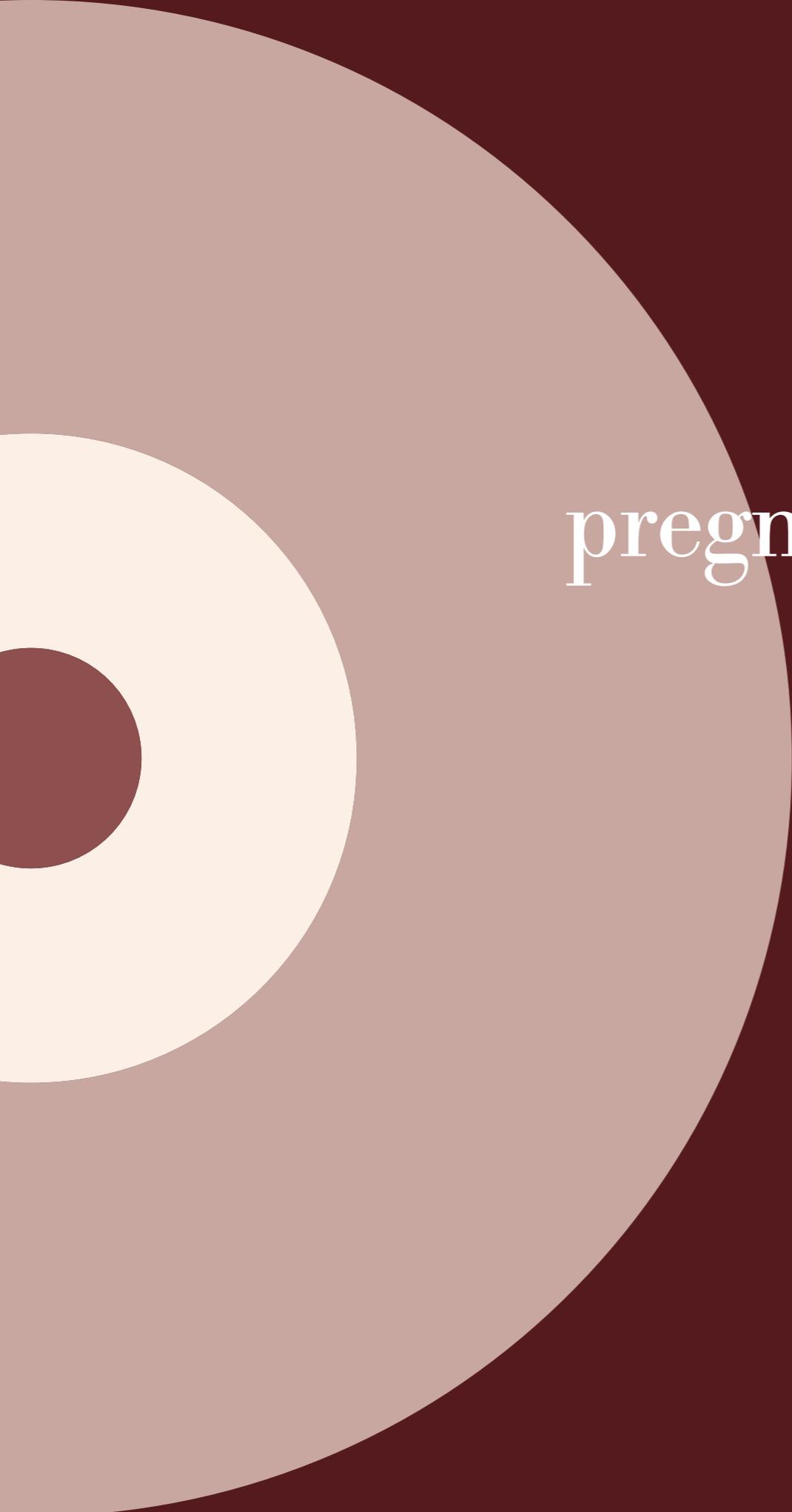
## what sort of other equipment do I need?

- A safe high chair (Always strap your baby in!)
- A soft, small spoon
- Bibs
- If on carpet, place an easy clean mat or tablecloth under the high chair. Babies toss food like it's their job. (Expect to get lots of food on your clothes and your baby's clothes!)
- Wipe-up towels
- Do not let babies self-feed in stroller while they are learning to eat.

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Introducing solids to your baby is an exciting time that you will remember forever. Cherish it. Ready, Set, Go! You got this! Visit [getboober.com](https://www.getboober.com) for more help and tips.

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