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GUIDELINES FOR FEEDING YOUR INFANT

Newborn - 4 months:

During the first few months of your infant's life, his digestive tract is immature, and the early introduction of solid foods can lead to potential problems with food allergies, growth, and an imbalance of nutrients. We recommend breastmilk be the only nutrient fed to infants for the first 4-6 months. For mothers who cannot breastfeed or choose to not, an iron fortified infant formula can be used and is a complete source of nutrition.



4-7 months:

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization recommend delaying the introduction of solid foods until about 6 months. Some infants will be ready to start solids earlier than this, and some may not be ready until closer to 7 or 8 months. General signs that your infant is ready to start solids include:

- ♥ Ability to sit unassisted or with minimal support
- ♥ Ability to hold head upright
- ♥ Ability to track a spoon
- ♥ Interest in what others are eating
- ♥ Increase in nursing to > 10-12x/day or drinking more than 32 ounces/day of formula



By six months, infants begin to need more iron and zinc than is found in breast milk alone. For this reason, single grain iron fortified baby cereals (oatmeal, barley, rice) are often a baby's first food. *Wheat cereals should be delayed until after 9 months of age.* Pureed meats (chicken, beef, turkey, etc.) provide an excellent source of iron and zinc and can be started by 6 months. Pureed fruits and vegetables can also be an infant's first foods (sweet potatoes, squash, carrots, banana, avocado, pears, apple, peaches, plums, etc.). The order with which you introduce new foods does not matter – meat, vegetables, fruits, and grains are all important for your baby.

IMPORTANT ROLE DELINEATION:

Parents decide when, where, and what to feed. Your baby decides how much to eat, if any!

Preparing baby cereal:

To prepare baby cereal for your baby, mix the instant cereal with water, breastmilk, or formula to a runny but spoonable consistency (do not add cereal to a bottle). You can gradually make the cereal thicker as your infant does well with eating. In the beginning your baby may eat less than a tablespoon of cereal once a day. Gradually you can increase the amount you feed your baby based on your baby's appetite, and add a second meal later in the day. By 9 months, most babies can eat three meals/day. Meal time should be pleasant and relaxed, with minimal distractions. Feeding time is a special time between you and your baby.



Other Foods:

Once your baby has started eating solids, one new single ingredient food can be introduced every 4-5 days. The time between new foods allows you to make sure your baby is tolerating the new food without symptoms of intolerance (e.g. skin rashes, vomiting, diarrhea).

Once a food is tolerated, it can be combined with other tolerated foods as desired (example: cereal and fruits, vegetable and meats, fruits and meats).

How Much Do I Feed My Baby?

Start with about 1 tablespoon of food; you can offer more if your infant still seems hungry (your baby is done when he turns his head away from the spoon, seems disinterested, and/or starts to fuss). Your baby's appetite is a reliable indicator of how much your baby needs. If your baby seems to not want a particular food, remember to try, try again. Babies may need to try a new food/flavor/texture 15-20 times before it is accepted.

Infants and Juice:

There is no need for juice for infants younger than 6 months. Babies older than 6 months may be offered 100% fruit juice from a cup (never a bottle), and should be limited to no more than 4 ounces per day. Babies do not need juice, and can get necessary nutrients from eating fruits. Try to offer a vitamin C containing fruit at least every other day. You can offer sips of water from a cup at mealtimes.

Homemade baby foods:

If you choose, you can make your own baby foods by using a blender, food processor, or baby food mill. Large amounts of a food can be prepared and frozen in ice cube trays for use at later meals. You do not need to add sugar, salt, or fat to homemade baby foods. The love you add and nature's own goodness are all your baby needs!

7-9 months (older infants)

By this age, most babies are ready to transition to table foods. Advance the texture of baby's food, going from smooth to mashed to chopped to tiny pieces. Some babies will transition quickly, while others will take more time to adjust to new textures. When babies can grasp food or use the pincer grasp (using pointer finger and thumb), offer small bites of soft foods (e.g. cooked pasta, well cooked vegetables, ripe skinned fruits, cooked potatoes). Meltable foods (such as cereals and crackers that "melt" in your mouth) are also good choices. As infants approach their first birthday, they will enjoy mealtimes with the family and should be having three meals per day. Most healthy foods the family eats can be offered to your baby, often with minimal modifications. And remember, breastmilk and/or formula still remain the most important part of your baby's intake for their entire first year.

FOODS TO AVOID UNTIL AFTER 1 YEAR:

- Cow's milk
- Honey (risk of botulism)
- Egg white
- Citrus fruits

NEVER GIVE AN INFANT :

(without your pediatrician's approval):

- Rice milk
- Soy milk (not the same as soy formula)
- Almond or other nut milks
- Soda, sugary beverages
- Peanut Butter

Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org)

UNICEF and WHO guidelines on infant feeding

Current Pediatric Diagnosis and Treatment, 19th edition, Chapter 10

Www.homemade-baby-food-recipes.com