

Provider Information

BF – Breastfeeding

BF-SF INTRODUCTION TO SOLID FOODS

OUTCOME: The parent/family will understand the appropriate ages to introduce various solid foods. (Teach any or all of the following as appropriate to this infant/family.)

STANDARDS:

1. Discuss the recommended introduction of solid foods:
 - a. Infants should not routinely be fed foods other than breast milk or formula prior to 6 months of age except under the advice of a healthcare provider. Emphasize that, for some time after the introduction of solid foods, breast milk/formula will still be the infant's primary source of nutrition.
 - b. Rice cereal is generally the preferred first solid food. It is normal for an infant to take very small amounts of solid foods for several months. Discard any uneaten food after each meal.
 - c. Pureed/or finely mashed vegetables and fruits should be started no earlier than 6 months of age. Emphasize the need to wait 3–5 days between additions of new foods to watch for adverse events from the foods. New foods might be rejected but may be accepted at a later time.
2. Emphasize that foods should never be given from a bottle or infant feeder and must always be fed from a spoon. Do not feed directly from jars or warm jars/bottles in microwave.
3. Discuss foods that should be avoided:
 - a. Highly allergenic food such as peanut butter, chocolate, eggs, cow or goat milk, and citrus should not be fed until the infant is one year of age.
 - b. Explain that honey and syrups may contain botulism toxin and should not be fed before one year of age.
 - c. Foods that are choking hazards should be avoided until 4 years of age, e.g., nuts, hard candies, gum, carrot sticks, meat on a bone, grapes, popcorn, hot dogs, unpeeled apples, slices of orange.
4. Discuss the importance of offering foods at the appropriate ages but do not insist that infants eat foods when they are not hungry:
 - a. Baby knows how much to eat and will stop when not interested. Do not force feed.
 - b. Some days babies eat a lot other days not as much.
 - c. No two babies eat the same.

5. Explain how to assess an infant's readiness to feed:
 - a. Tongue thrusting is an indication of not being ready to eat solids.
 - b. Opens mouth when seeing food.
 - c. Closes lips over a spoon.
 - d. Keeps food in mouth instead of spitting it out.
 - e. Sits up alone without support.
6. Explain that the body of knowledge regarding infant feedings has changed dramatically and advice from family/friends may no longer be appropriate; talk to your healthcare provider.

Introduction to Solid Foods

Breastfeeding mothers are often confused about how to go about starting solid foods with their baby. Questions often arise about whether or not to breastfeed before or after feeding the solids.

Breast milk should be the primary source of nutrition for the first 6 months of life. After that time, your baby is ready for solid foods.

When an infant begins to eat solid foods, it is best to introduce one food at a time. This helps parents to identify any allergic responses or food intolerances. Infants will show their acceptance of solid foods by slowly increasing the amount of food they eat. Allow the infant to eat at their own pace, and when done offer the breast.

Keep an eye on the baby's fluid intake during this time. If too many nursings are replaced by solid feedings too quickly, your baby may not be getting enough fluid and constipation may result. Putting the baby to the breast frequently will alleviate these problems.

Here is a sample-feeding schedule for an older baby (9 months to one year). Remember that there is no right or wrong way to feed meals to your baby, but if you feel that you need some guidelines, then give this a try...

5am: Wakeup/Breastfeed

7am: Breakfast

8am: Nap (with or without a nursing beforehand, depending on your baby)

10am: Breastfeed

12: Lunch

1pm: Nap (with or without a nursing beforehand)

3pm: Breastfeed

5pm: Dinner

7pm: Bedtime/Breastfeed

Your baby may still awaken once a night for a nursing. This is normal.

Guidelines to Starting Solid Foods

To help ease your baby's transition to solid foods, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Start solids sometime after 6 months, once your baby is showing signs of being ready and can eat from a spoon
- An iron fortified rice cereal is usually the first solid food that your baby should eat
- Experiment to find the best time to feed your baby solids, for example before, after, or at a separate time from formula or breastfeeding to easily detect food allergies, only give one new, single ingredient food at a time, and wait 3-4 days before introducing another.
- Begin with just a teaspoon or less when you are first introducing solids and then slowly increase to a tablespoon or more as your baby gets the hang of eating solid foods
- After rice cereal, consider moving on to other cereals, like oatmeal and barley, and then introduce strained vegetables, fruits and meats last.
- Continue to offer your baby an iron fortified cereal even after you introduce other solid foods, as it is a good source of iron for your growing infant
- Talk to your healthcare provider if your baby will not eat any solids by the time he/she is 7-8 months old.

Click here for a Patient Education Handout for the mother on the [Introduction of Solid Foods during Breastfeeding](#).

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