

Feeding Your Child During Their First 12 Months of Life

Nutrition Education Adapted from the 2020-25 Dietary Guidelines' New Chapter on Infant and Toddler Nutrition

Why is infant nutrition so important?

During an infant's first year of life, infants should receive adequate amounts of essential nutrients because these foods are needed for healthy brain development and overall growth. Also, establishing healthy dietary patterns early in life can influence eating behaviors and overall health throughout the course of life.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that: "There is no evidence that delaying the introduction of allergenic foods, including peanuts, eggs, and fish, beyond 4 to 6 months prevents atopic disease."

Age	Key Recommendation	Details
0 – 4 months	Exclusive breastmilk and/or formula feeding	<p>What form of milk? Human breastmilk, iron-fortified infant formula, or a combination of both</p> <p>Do I need to supplement the milk with anything? You may need to provide a vitamin D supplement, depending on which form of milk you choose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For exclusive human breastmilk feeding, vitamin D supplement of 400 IU per day ➤ For breastmilk/formula mixed feeding, vitamin D supplement of 400 IU per day ➤ For exclusive iron-fortified formula feeding, no vitamin D supplement is needed, since infant formula is vitamin- fortified
4 – 6 months	When your child is ready, start to introduce complementary foods	<p>How do I know when my child is ready? The ages that infants show signs of readiness vary and are typically between ages 4 and 6 months. Signs that your child may be ready for complementary foods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Being able to control the head and neck ➤ Sitting up alone or with support ➤ Bringing objects to the mouth ➤ Trying to grasp small objects, such as food or toys ➤ Swallowing food rather than pushing it back out onto the chin <p>There is no evidence that delaying the introduction of potentially allergenic foods helps prevent food allergy (Please see information specific to high-risk infants below)</p>
6 – 12 months	Introduce complementary foods no later than 6 months	<p>What complementary foods should I give my child? Infants should be encouraged to consume a variety of complementary foods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduce iron-rich foods: meats, seafood, iron-fortified infant cereals ➤ Introduce zinc-rich foods: meats, beans, zinc-fortified infant cereals ➤ Introduce a variety of foods from all food groups: protein, fruits and vegetables, dairy, grains ➤ Introduce potentially allergenic food groups: egg, dairy, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, shellfish, fish, wheat



How do I know if my child is at high risk of developing a peanut allergy?



Risk factors: If your child has severe eczema, egg allergy, or both, s/he may be at a higher risk of developing a peanut allergy

Recommendations: age-appropriate, peanut-containing foods should be introduced to the diet as early as age 4 to 6 months.

For more information, check with your child's healthcare provider and visit:

niaid.nih.gov/sites/default/files/addendum-peanut-allergy-prevention-guidelines.pdf

Choosing Nutrient-Dense Foods from Each Food Group

Food Groups	Benefits	Examples
Protein	<p>Can be good sources of iron, zinc, choline, protein and/or healthy fats</p> <p>*These key nutrients are critical for infant brain development</p>	<p>Meat, poultry, eggs, low mercury seafood, nuts, seeds, soy</p> 
Fruits & Vegetables	<p>Can be good sources of potassium, vitamin A and vitamin C</p> <p>*Beans, peas and lentils are also great sources of fiber</p>	<p>Blueberries, bananas, pears, avocado, squash, broccoli, spinach, peas</p> 
Grains	<p>Can be good sources of fiber and iron</p> <p>*Choose whole grains over refined grains</p>	<p>Iron-fortified infant cereals, including oat, barley, multigrain, and rice cereals</p> 
Dairy	<p>Can be good sources of calcium and vitamin D</p> <p>*Infants should not consume cow's milk or fortified soy beverages in place of breastmilk or infant formula before 12 months of age</p>	<p>Yogurt (including soy-based yogurt) and cheese</p> 

Establishing Healthy Dietary Patterns in an Infant's First Year of Life

✓ Dietary Components to Encourage

- A wide variety of fruits, especially berries and whole fruits
- A wide variety of vegetables from each vegetable group, which includes dark green (ex. broccoli), red/orange (ex. carrots), legumes (i.e., beans, peas, lentils), starchy vegetables (ex. potatoes)
- Whole grains
- Unprocessed meat

⚠ Dietary Components to Limit

- Processed meats (ex. cold cuts)
- Refined grains
- 100% fruit juice
- Foods with high sodium content
- Foods containing added sugars

Trans Fat 0g	-
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 57g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	

⊘ Dietary Components to Avoid

- Honey and unpasteurized foods and beverages
- Sugar-sweetened beverages (ex. soda, sweet tea)
- Liquid cow's milk, fortified soy beverages, and milk alternatives (such as plant-based milk) in place of breastmilk or infant formula
- Caffeinated beverages
- Seafood with high mercury content
- Loose nuts and other choke-risk foods

Introducing your child to the 8 major allergens

The 8 major allergens include:

Dairy



Eggs



Peanuts



Tree Nuts



Soy



Wheat



Fish



Shellfish



The 8 major potentially allergenic foods should be introduced as complementary foods.

There is evidence that introducing peanut-containing foods in an infant's first year of life can reduce the risk that s/he will develop a peanut allergy

There is no evidence that delaying introduction of allergenic foods beyond 6 months prevents food allergy.

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➤ Adapted from the 2020-25 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans: "Home: Dietary Guidelines for Americans." Home | Dietary Guidelines for Americans, www.dietaryguidelines.gov/.