

## TENTH STREET PEDIATRIC MEDICAL GROUP, INC.

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### INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS

SOLID FOODS provide an important contribution to the nutrition and psychosocial development of the infant. Introducing solid foods at approximately 4-6 months of age is appropriate for most infants. Iron supplementation from solids is necessary since the baby's iron stores may have been depleted during the first 4-6 months. Also, by this time the protrusion reflex (sticking the tongue out) of early infancy has disappeared and the ability to swallow non-liquid food has been established. At 5 or 6 months of age, the infant is able to sit with support, has head and neck control and is able to communicate lack of interest or satiety by leaning back and turning away.

Introduction of solids too early in infancy carries the potential risk of encouraging overfeeding, and it may increase the risk for aspiration and allergic dermatitis.

Feedings should be a pleasant experience for the baby and family. Eating habits, likes and dislikes are communicated to children by their families from the time they begin eating. It is important to expose the baby to healthy foods and a balanced diet without forcing or struggling with the baby.

Foods should be introduced one at a time with a 3-5 day interval between any two new foods. Always feed solid foods with a spoon, never through a bottle.

BEGIN FEEDING SOLIDS once or twice a day, at times that work for your family. Some people offer the baby part of a milk feeding before giving a solid meal to decrease severe hunger, allowing the baby to relax during the new activity of eating solids. Others give milk feeds completely separate from solid feeds, allowing 45 minutes to 1 hour between them. Either approach is okay.

Types of food presented to young children are influenced by culture, tradition, and individual preference; there are many ways to begin to feed your baby. One way is to begin with baby cereal (barley, oatmeal, or rice), offering 2-4 tbsp. of dry cereal mixed with approximately 2 ounces of breast milk or formula to form a thick puree. Another is to start with pureed vegetable, meat, or with ripe avocado. Either way, the first experience the baby has with solids may result in much of it being pushed out of the mouth by the tongue in a sucking motion. Allow a few days for this to disappear.

After 3-4 days of the first food, you may begin to introduce other foods one at a time—vegetables, fruits and meat. Many people like to start with yellow or green vegetables, but you can also begin with pureed meat or fruits, or alternate. Either way, use pureed food, either from jars or pureed on your own using ripe or steamed food.

Allergic reactions to cereal or starter fruits or vegetables are very uncommon. In the unlikely event that your baby develops a rash or swollen lips/face, discontinue that food and discuss it with us at your next check up.

The most common starter foods include the following:

- carrots
- green beans
- squash
- peas
- spinach
- sweet potatoes
- potatoes
- pears
- peaches
- avocado
- bananas
- apple sauce

If after starting solids your baby develops constipation, add fruits that start with "p" (peaches, pears, prunes, plums).

Once you have made your way through the fruits and vegetables, you can continue to expand your baby's diet. This happens between 6-8 months. You may introduce more proteins (such as chicken, turkey, tofu, egg and salmon) and dairy products (full fat yogurt, cottage cheese and soft cheese).

Most babies need foods to be pureed until 7-8 months, when a lumpy consistency is tolerated (cottage cheese, for example). By 10-12 months, finger foods and soft table foods can be introduced.

**FOODS TO AVOID:** Due to the risk of choking, hard, round foods (nuts, grapes, round candies, raw carrots, hot dogs) should be avoided until at least 2 years of age. Popcorn and whole nuts should be avoided for the same reason. Honey should be avoided until 1 year of age. (This is not due to allergies, but rather the very slight possibility of infant botulism.)

Peanut products (such as smooth peanut butter), but not whole peanuts, can be introduced before one year. Current studies show that this may in fact prevent peanut allergy.

**PREPARATION OF FOOD:** You can make your own baby foods by pureeing cooked fruits and vegetables in their own water. Salt is not necessary, but feel free to use moderate seasonings. Foods may be stored by pouring the puree into ice cube trays, freezing, and then putting cubes into separate plastic bags and defrosting as needed.

If you are using commercially prepared baby foods, read labels carefully. Avoid additives and dessert foods with empty calories.

**MEAL SCHEDULING:** Before solids are begun, most babies require at least 5-6 milk feedings per day. As your baby becomes more accustomed to a variety and larger amounts of solid foods, milk needs should decrease to 4-5 feedings. By 9-12 months of age, offer breakfast, lunch, dinner and water with meals. Your child will drink breast milk or formula 3-4 times per day. Most children add a snack around 1 year.

Following is a sample menu to be used merely as a guideline for a good variety of nutrients. Amounts of solid foods needed can vary greatly among infants, depending on size, metabolism, and activity levels. A general rule is that at 1 year of age, approximately one half of your child's intake should be from solids, and one half from milk.

#### SAMPLE MENU AT 9-12 MONTHS OF AGE

##### BREAKFAST

1/4-1/2 cup cereal or mashed egg

1/4-1/2 cup fruit

##### LUNCH

1/4-1/2 cup yogurt or cottage cheese

1/4-1/2 cup yellow or orange vegetable

##### DINNER

1/4-1/2 cup poultry, meat, tofu, cereal

1/4-1/2 cup green vegetable

1/4 cup noodles, pasta, rice, potato

1/4 cup fruit

#### IDEAS FOR FINGER FOODS

- avocado
- cooked apple pieces
- scrambled egg
- soft cheese bits
- soft cooked vegetables
- well cooked beans
- noodles
- rice
- shredded chicken
- small meatballs or turkey balls
- cooked tofu
- fruit slices