

INFANT NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

(BIRTH-12 MONTHS)

PURPOSE:

These guidelines are designed to meet the nutritional needs during the first year of life to promote optimal growth and development.

DESCRIPTION:

Exclusive breast-feeding is recommended for all normal infants from birth to 4 to 6 months of age. Breast-feeding with the appropriate introduction of other foods is recommended for the remainder of the first year, or longer if desired. Infants not receiving breast milk should receive iron-fortified formula. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that solids be introduced between 4 to 6 months of age.

CALORIC REQUIREMENTS

Age	Calories
0-6 months	108 calories per kilogram (kg)* (650 calories a day)
6-12 months	98 calories/kg (900 calories per day)

*One kilogram equals 2.2 pounds

BASIC INFORMATION:

Breast milk or formula fortified with iron is sufficient for healthy infants during the first six months of life. Introduction of food should begin as nutritional requirements increase with age; developmental patterns will also help to indicate this time.

Developmental signs showing the infant is ready for solids include when the baby can sit with support, poses lips to receive a spoon, closes mouth around the spoon, no longer pushes food out of mouth with tongue, maintains grasp when object is placed in hands, reaches for objects, and begins mouthing objects.

Suggested age for introduction of solids	Foods
4-6 months	add iron-enriched baby cereals (rice cereal first)
6-8 months	add one strained fruit (vitamin C-rich serving per day), vegetables; strained meats (per health care provider's advice)
8-10 months	add strained meats, fruit juices in a cup, egg yolk, plain or low sugar yogurt
10-12 months	add soft mashed table foods, crackers, cheese strips, other finger foods

There are several potential disadvantages to the early introduction of solid foods. Many health care providers and pediatric nutritionists believe the early introduction of solids increases the child's risk of developing food allergies; the solid foods may displace nutrient-rich breast milk or infant formula; inappropriate choices of solid foods may cause digestive and bowel changes; and the infant may develop a tendency to overeat.

Certain foods are not appropriate for infants; desserts and other concentrated sweets; high-sugar fruit punch, gelatin water, soda, popcorn, nuts, hot dogs, whole grapes, honey, hard candies. Plain cow's milk should not be added to an infant's diet until 12 months of age due to the increased risk of cow's milk protein allergy and gastrointestinal problems if introduced at an earlier age. If there is a family history of food allergies, some health care providers and dietitians recommend delaying the introduction of wheat, egg whites, citrus, and soy protein.