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INTRODUCING FOODS FOR INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN WITH FOOD ALLERGIES

WHAT NUTRITION SHOULD A FOOD-ALLERGIC INFANT HAVE BEFORE SOLIDS?

- Breast feeding is the preferred nutrition for infants before solids are introduced
 - Food proteins ingested by a mother can be in breast milk
 - Ask your doctor if you need to alter your diet while breast-feeding
- Infants with a milk allergy should avoid formulas containing whole milk proteins
 - Formulas made from “extensive” milk “hydrolysis” labeled as “hypoallergenic” for milk allergy are usually tolerated
 - If extensively hydrolyzed milk-based formula is not tolerated, formulas without intact proteins (amino acid based) may be recommended
 - Formulas that are “partial” hydrolysates are not safe for infants with milk allergy
 - Milk from other mammals (sheep, goat) are not adequate nutrition and are likely to cause an allergic reaction
- Soy formula is usually not recommended for infants with food allergies in the first year
- Whole milk is not appropriate nutrition for infants

WHEN IS AN INFANT READY TO TRY SOLIDS?

- It is recommended that solids not be started until your infant is about 6 months of age.
- An infant is ready for solids when he is able to sit up, alone or with support, can open his mouth when he sees the spoon, and can turn his head if he does not want the food. The infant should also be able to close his lips over the spoon and not push the food back out with his tongue.

WHAT SOLIDS SHOULD BE OFFERED AND WHEN?

- Your doctor can provide guidance specific for your child’s allergies.
 - For example, your child’s specific allergies may warrant a different order of food introduction than the examples on the next page.
- There may be certain foods your doctor wants you to avoid introducing

WHEN SHOULD I TRY INTRODUCING “ALLERGENIC” FOODS?

Depending upon your child’s individual allergies, your doctor may advise your food-allergic child to avoid eating the more “allergenic” foods such as milk, egg, soy, wheat, peanut, nuts, fish and shellfish until after testing shows they have “outgrown” the allergy or confirming they are not allergic.

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AN EXAMPLE OF FOODS TO TRY BY AGE (AVOIDING COMMON ALLERGENS)

- Ask your doctor for specific plans for your child's allergies
- Many doctors recommend waiting a few days between trying new foods, to be sure the new food does not cause any problems.

Single ingredient foods should be introduced first.

Rice, oat cereal [~6 months]

Orange vegetables: squash, sweet potato, and carrots. [~6-7 months]

Fruits (apple, pear, banana, plum, peach, and apricot) [~8-10 months]

Green vegetables (spinach, broccoli, and green beans) [~8-10 months]

Corn, white potato, (barley and wheat if allowed) [~10-11 months]

Meats (chicken, turkey, lamb, beef, pork) [~10-12 months]

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT FEEDING MY INFANT?

Using a cup: At around 7-9 months, offer infant formula in a cup at mealtime. Eventually all bottle feedings will be replaced by cup feedings around one year of age.

Changing textures: At about 9 months, your baby is ready to learn about textures. Offer foods with lumps and bumps. Cut soft foods into bite-sized pieces so your child can pick them up and begin learning how to self feed. For example, try lightly cooked soft vegetables, peeled and soft fruit.

CAUTION: Your baby can choke on small, hard foods. Never give your baby popcorn, chips, raisins, grapes, nuts, seeds or hotdogs that have been cut into round slices.

Table foods: By about 10-12 months your child should be eating foods from the family table – cut foods into bite size pieces.

If your child is allergic to milk, talk to your doctor or dietitian about the best milk alternative for your child.

Patience is needed. Be patient and loving as your child learns to feed himself. Weaning takes time. A happy feeding time makes your child feel content and secure

RESOURCES

- This program has additional information sheets that you may find helpful
- Explore additional educational materials, for example, from Food Allergy Research & Education (www.foodallergy.org)

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