Nourish Wellness

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Guide to Feeding Your Infant

Congrats on this exciting milestone! It is so much fun to feed and nurture your growing and developing child. I have provided a summary of the advice I usually share in the office to guide you on the feeding journey. Please be aware that my book, ***A Parent's Guide to Intuitive Eating,*** is a great resource and includes this information in more detail as well as how to support intuitive eating which is one of the best skills you can foster in your child. You can pick up a copy in the office, your favorite online bookseller or the library.

Newborn

Benefits of Breastmilk

If you are able to nurse your baby, breastmilk provides many advantages for your little one. It is generally easier to digest and leads to soft stools. In addition, it helps build a healthy colony of bacteria in the gut, has been linked to decreased risk of infections and can grant passive immunity to infections that mother is immune to. But what is really great is that *babies can start tasting subtle flavors of the foods that mother eats in her diet*. This is a great time to eat lots of fruits, veggies and beans! Consuming whole plant foods will pass more antioxidants down to your baby and will also keep YOU healthy too! And it will also increase the likelihood that your baby will prefer vegetables and fruits when they start eating solids.

Babies tend to nurse at least every 2-3 hours. We recommend that you become familiar with and follow your babies hunger cues and feed them on demand. If you are having difficulty with nursing, please seek help! Let us know and we can get you connected with a lactation consultant.

Aiming for a minimum 6 months of breast feeding is a great goal to start with. However, if you are able to nurse for the entire first year, that is fantastic! It is also never wrong to continue to breast feed until it feels right to wean. Many mothers in our practice will continue to nurse until their child is 2 or 3 years old.

Cow's Milk Dairy in Mother's Diet

At least ***four percent*** of babies will develop sensitivity to cow's milk protein that passes through mother's milk. This protein is present in cow's milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream or anything that is made of cow's milk or has milk ingredients such as casein. Symptoms of cow's milk protein intolerance include fussiness, colic, blood in stools, foamy or frothy stools or increased spitting up. If we suspect that this may be occurring in your baby, we will recommend that you eliminate dairy from your diet for at least two weeks to see if this helps. Because a certain percent of babies that are sensitive to milk will also be sensitive to soy, it may be worthwhile to also avoid consuming soy products during this trial. The good news is that there are plenty of delicious plant-based alternatives made from other ingredients such as cashew, oat, flax, coconut and many others. If you have questions or need more help with this we can provide you resources.

Fed is Best

Some mothers may not be able to provide all or any of baby's calories through breastmilk. This can be really hard on some mommies that really wanted to be able to nurse their babies and have struggled with breast feeding. Let me reassure you: FED is best. Babies do just fine on formula. In addition, ANY breast milk is better than NO breast milk. Even if you can't provide ALL of your babies nutrition, if you are willing to provide what you CAN, it still has benefits. If you are struggling and need help with nursing, please ask us.

Choosing Formula

Given the research that is increasingly being published on the potential harms of cow's dairy on humans and babies, if babies DO need formula for supplementation or to provide all of their nutrition, we recommend an organic soy formula (such as Earth's Best Plant-Based Infant formula) OR a hydrolyzed formula such as Alimentum or Nutramigen.

Babies will need breast milk or an infant formula (or a combination of both) for at the first 12 months of life. In addition, if babies are exclusively breast fed or taking less than 75% formula, they MUST be supplemented with **vitamin D** either from oral drops that are given directly to the baby OR through mother's breast milk (see section on supplements).

4-6 months

When to start solids:

We recommend that you start offering your baby solids sometime between 4 and 6 months. Signs of readiness include reaching for food, seeming very interested (even mesmerized) by food, able to open mouth for spoon, and sitting up supported.

There have been many different recommendations for initiating solids which are rapidly evolving in this area. As this is Dr. Yami's area of passion, she stays up to date with the research. Our goal is to help your baby establish the ***most health-promoting habits as early as possible*** to decrease chronic disease and increase longevity.

The magical window of opportunity

Currently, we recommend launching straight into the bitter leafy greens (spinach, kale, broccoli, brussels sprouts) when baby is ready to start complementary foods. There is a specific reason for this. Between 5 and 7 months the brain is particularly receptive to and accepting of bitter flavors. Leafy greens and non-starchy vegetables are incredibly nutrient-dense and packed with antioxidants and vitamins. They are beneficial to eat and provide a health advantage. Therefore, it is in your babies best interest to develop an appreciation for them! Babies find it EASY to like sweet foods such as carrots, sweet peas, sweet potatoes, fruits, etc. That is why I urge you to START with the bitter, stronger flavored green veggies.

When you first start solids aim for one once per day about 2 TBSP. It is important to remember that these foods are not meant to replace CALORIES in your babies diet, therefore do not decrease the amount of breast milk or formula that they take.

During this magical time, expose your baby to as many different flavors of vegetables as possible. Think of it as "flavor bootcamp", you don't have to wait more than a day in between new foods. It is ok to make your own baby foods, but I do recommend sticking to organic if possible (especially of the dirty dozen) and make sure that vegetables are **well cooked and pureed**.

Once you have gone through all the leafy greens and more bitter green vegetables, you can proceed to other non-starchy vegetables (such as zucchini), then to starchy vegetables (such as sweet potatoes), whole grains (such as oatmeal) and fruits. There are many foods to explore in these categories, so have fun and focus on VARIETY here, don't just stick to the old familiar standbys. **Be adventurous with your baby!**

Introducing Allergens at 6 months

Researchers and allergy specialists have discovered that early introduction of potential allergens is beneficial and may decrease the risk of developing life threatening allergies later on. It is now recommended that we expose babies to at least a little bit of these foods to get the body used to these proteins. The one with the most research is peanuts. We are now recommending that you start giving your baby peanut butter by 6 months of age. We recommend adding it to their baby food 2-3 times per week. Alternatively, you can dilute a bit with water and give it directly.

Another potential allergen is egg. The most allergenic part of the egg is the egg white. Eggs do have health risks, they are devoid of fiber and low in antioxidants. In addition, they are very high in cholesterol. For this reason, we recommend that you keep the exposure low, but regular. The amount that you give your baby does not have to be large. Just 1 teaspoon 2-3 times per week is sufficient.

Fish is another potential allergen that may benefit babies from early introduction. Just as egg, the health risks of over-consuming fish are a bit higher so remember that the amount of exposure does not have to be large. In addition, please stay away from large predator fish varieties that are high in heavy metal contamination (mercury) such as swordfish, tuna, king mackerel. Fish that are higher in beneficial omega 3 fatty acids AND tend to be lower in mercury contamination include sardines, anchovies, salmon.

Finally, introducing cow's milk to babies before age 1 is tricky. We feel that the risks of dairy exposure to infants outweigh the benefits. However, if there is a **strong** family history of eczema, asthma or allergies, it may be worth introducing very small amounts of UNSWEETENED YOGURT (1 tsp) 3 times per week. There are many many other adverse effects of dairy that we know for sure can start in infancy for babies under 12 months of age which is why we strongly recommend keeping exposure to dairy low in babies (and children!).

6-9 months

Progressing on foods

At 6 months of age we recommend introducing peanut butter (if you have not already) and legumes (lentils, split peas, and beans). For the peanut butter, mix with a food that baby already eats such as a fruit or whole grain and continue to integrate into their diet at least once or twice per week. Try to give legumes at least once per day, but ensure that they are well cooked. Legumes are an EXCELLENT source of fiber, iron, calcium and antioxidants. Beans are also the only food that has been associated with longevity in the Blue Zones studies. Don't be afraid to try different kinds as there are **hundreds** to choose from!

At 6 months of age, babies are usually eating solid foods twice per day and by 9 months of age they are eating solids three times per day.

Introducing Water

At this age, it is safe to introduce water at meal times via cup. This is to help baby become familiar with using a cup and drinking water. The type of cup is up to you; you can use sippy, cups with straw, or a tumbler. It does not have to be a large amount and at the beginning they will mostly play with it and spill it. You can also give water as a source of additional hydration if it is particularly hot ouside. However, more frequent nursing also provides sufficient hydration.

Baby-Led Weaning

Between 6 and 9 month of age some babies no longer want purees. This is a great time to practice what is called baby-led weaning. Give soft foods to your baby directly on their high chair tray. Make sure not to overwhelm your baby with too many choices at once.

9-12 months

Between 9 and 12 months of age most babies are eating what their parents are eating.
At this age, it is tempting to start offering more processed foods and foods that are high in sugar, salt and added oils. However, these foods are not providing as many benefits as whole plant foods.

It is worthwhile to take the time to **make the family meal health-promoting** and focused on whole plant foods such as vegetables, fruits, beans and whole grains. You should also continue to offer whole plant food sources of fat such as nut butters, avocado and coconut. Please avoid processed meats such as hot dogs, lunch meats, and bacon. These are known carcinogens and have health risks. Beware of choking hazards and avoid hard foods and those that are shaped like the windpipe such as whole grapes, hot dogs, whole nuts, etc.

Continue to support good habits such as sitting for meals and **develop a structure for meals and snacks** so that the day does not become an all day grazing session.

Supplements

All exclusively breast-fed babies should be supplemented with Vitamin D either from infant drops or through mother. Babies can be given 400-600 IU vitamin D drops daily or moms can take 6,400 IU of vitamin D daily while they continue to nurse.

After babies turn 1 year of age, I recommend that they be started on a daily multivitamin that includes vitamin D and Vitamin B12. Here are some brands that I trust:

Zarbee's liquid multivitamin
Garden of Life liquid multivitamin
Dr. Fuhrman's Pixie Vites (chewable or powder)
Smarty Pants Organics Kids Multivitamin (gummy)
Mega food Kids multivitamin (tablets or powder)

Resources:

Books

A Parent's Guide to Intuitive Eating: How to Raise Kids Who Love to Eat Healthy, *by Yami Cazorla-Lancaster, DO, MPH, MS*

Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense, by Ellyn Satter

Disease-Proof Your Child: Feeding Kids Right, by Joel Fuhrman

Forks over Knives Family: Every Parent's Guide to Raising Healthy, Happy Kids on a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet, by Alona Pulde, MD and Matthew Lederman, MD

Great online PDF:

First Steps Nutrition:
Eating well for Vegan Under 5's
https://bit.ly/3cw08ku

Doctor Yami on social media:
Instagram: @thedoctoryami
Facebook: @thedoctoryami
YouTube: Veggie Doctor TV

Relevant videos by Dr. Yami:
Weaning
How to get your kids to eat their vegetables
My child won't eat!
5 Tips for Raising an Intuitive Eater
Q&A: Doesn't My chid NEED Cow's Milk?

Podcast: Veggie Doctor Radio (iTunes, Spotify)
Relevant episodes:

Episode #90: Constipation and Inflammatory Bowel Disease in children
Episode #83: Preventing Food Allergies
Episode #82: What You Need to Know about Allergies
Episode #81: Evidence-Based Risks of Drinking Milk
Episode #78: Feeding Toddlers
Episode #75: Chapter 1 of my book (Tears at Mealtime)
Episode #73: Plant-based pregnancy and raising plant-based kids
Episode #71: Why we should ALL eat more whole plant foods
Episode #69: Extreme picky eating
Episode #68: Is your Child a Picky Eater?
Episode #67: Intuitive Eating and Your Child
Episode #66: Respecting Size Differences in children
Episode #50: Feeding problems and language delays in children
Episode #29: Achieving breast feeding success
Episode #11: Feeding children a plant-based diet
Episode #6: Raising Vegan Children

Helpful Instagram accounts:

Plantbased Juniors @plantbasedjuniors
Leafy Vibe @leafy_vibe