



920 Viewmont Drive – Dickson City, PA - 18519

## INFANT FEEDING HANDOUT

During the first several months of life, infants require only breast milk or formula on demand. Water is not necessary and can in fact be harmful. Cow's milk is not recommended for infant consumption until the age of 12 months because it will not meet the fat, protein or iron needs of your baby.

### Introduction of solid foods:

Solid foods may be introduced anytime between 4 and 6 months old when your child is developmentally ready. Your child must be able to sit with some support and have good head and neck control.

You should never place cereal into your child's bottles unless advised to do so by your physician. **And contrary to some widely held beliefs, introducing cereals early in infancy will not help your child to sleep longer.** Longer periods of sleep occur as the infant's nervous system matures and is not affected by what he/she eats.

- **Cereal**

When starting baby cereal, begin with rice cereal first, mixed with breast milk or formula. Begin with a tablespoon or two and add enough liquid to keep the consistency fairly runny. The first few feedings will seem awkward, but soon your baby will be accepting the spoon easily and swallowing more than he or she will leave on their face. You can increase these feedings to twice a day and may offer more cereal as baby desires, with a maximum of seven tablespoons (½ cup) at each serving. Once you have introduced rice, and then try other types of cereal such as oatmeal or barley.

The optimal time to offer solids is about one hour after a feeding with breast milk or formula. Please remember that the solids being introduced into your baby's diet are meant as a supplement to and not a replacement for liquid feedings.. Breast milk or formula is still your baby's main source of nutrition and the volume he or she is taking should not change significantly with the introduction of solid food.

- **Fruit/Vegetables**

Once your child has completed the basic cereals, it is time to introduce fruits and vegetables. *The key to introduction of new items is an "observation" period where only one new food is introduced to baby's diet every 4-5 days.* This allows parents to monitor for any signs of reaction – wide spread rash on the body, excessive/unusual vomiting or diarrhea. Please notify us of any adverse food reactions.

It does not matter the order in which you introduce solids as long as you are doing it one new food every 4-5 days. Some people choose to do fruits first, some veggies and some by color group. You may buy prepackaged baby food or make your own which is very easy and inexpensive. Once open a container of food must be used within 24 hours. It is also recommended that the desired amount of baby food be taken out of the package and fed from a clean bowl with a clean spoon. If you feed directly from the container bacteria from the baby's mouth will contaminate the food and any unused food cannot be saved.

At approximately 6-7 months of age your baby will be ready for 3 solid meals a day (cereal should be served at two of them). Try to space them as a breakfast, lunch and dinner and remember breast milk and/or formula are still very important. Your baby will probably be taking 3-4 feedings at breast or bottle with approximately 24-30 ounces per day. Cereal is recommended twice daily due to its iron content. Other iron rich foods include red meat, greens, and pureed beans.

Meats may be introduced at this time and may be given as plain varieties or as part of a “dinner”, as long as your child has previously been fed all of the other ingredients on the label. Once you have tried all of the stage one single ingredient foods you may move on to stage two. Stage two does not have much more texture than stage one, but the containers are larger and there are more combinations available. Yogurt may also be introduced anytime after 6 months.

How much or little is taken at a feeding differs from child to child. Stop when it seems like your child is losing interest or turning his/her head away.

### **Introduction of Juice:**

Juice should not be introduced unless specifically instructed by your doctor. It has very little in the way of nutritional value. Small amounts of water can be given to babies after the age of 6 months, preferably in a cup.

### **Finger Foods:**

As your child’s fine motor skills advance, you will notice that he/she will develop a fine pincer grasp between 8-10 months of age. This marks an opportunity to utilize their natural curiosity for self-feeding. Appropriate items to give to baby include ripe banana, Cheerios, elbow or other cooked macaroni, soft pieces of bread, pancakes, and diced and slightly overcooked vegetables. Infant teething crackers/biscuits may be used now as well if you have not already introduced them to your child. Puffy snacks are also a good finger food. Some acidic foods such as berries, tomatoes and citrus can cause a rash around the mouth. This is not a food allergy but rather a localized reaction.

### **Dairy Products:**

While we have already mentioned that cow’s milk should not be offered in large quantities until age 1 year, small introduction of some dairy products may begin at 9 months. These would include cottage cheese and other cheeses such as, American, cheddar, provolone, Swiss and mozzarella. Soft cheeses such as blue cheese, feta, or fresh mozzarella should not be given to infants due to the risk of exposure to bacteria possibly contained in these products.

### **Infant cups:**

An infant cup can be introduced as early as 6-7 months. Your baby, however, may not truly drink with ease from it until closer to 9-10 months. A good starting point is to place water in the cup and offer with meals. Once he or she begins to use an infant cup with some ease, you should begin placing all drinks (including formula or breast milk) into the cup. This will help to transition the infant from the bottle easily by 1 year of age.

### **Foods to avoid:**

Due to concerns for botulism, honey is not recommended for the first year of life. Otherwise it is OK for babies to have whatever you are eating including peanut butter, chocolate, eggs, shellfish or wheat. The most current evidence maintains that early introduction of these highly allergenic foods decreased your child's chance of developing a food allergy. These foods should be introduced after other solid foods have been fed and tolerated and in the same manner – one new food every 4-5 days. Some suggestions for introducing peanuts (which are choking hazards) including mixing some peanut butter into infant cereal or grinding the peanut into a fine dust which is then added to pureed solids.

Please be mindful of foods which are choking hazards. Common choking hazard foods include hot dogs, grapes, peanuts, or hard candy.

Please keep in mind that this handout is meant as a reference guide to aid you in the next several months. Feel free to contact our office with questions during normal business hours.