

NEW 2020 USDA FEEDING GUIDELINES FOR INFANTS

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW IN THE FIRST 12 MONTHS OF LIFE

Infants consume small quantities of foods, so it's important to make sure that parents pay attention to what they feed their babies. **THE KEY TAKEAWAY: MAKE EVERY BITE COUNT!**



1

AIM TO BREASTFEED UNTIL A BABY IS READY TO EAT, IDEALLY UNTIL AROUND 4-6 MONTHS (OR LONGER, IF DESIRED).

- Although breast milk is considered the best food for growing babies, they will still need a daily vitamin D supplement beginning soon after birth.
- If breastfeeding is not possible, infants should be fed an iron-fortified infant formula.

HELPFUL TIP Parents can easily find vitamin D drops at any grocery store or online. Look for brands with 400 IU of vitamin D3 per drop.



2

FEED ALLERGENIC FOODS EARLY AND OFTEN.

- When parents introduce foods at 4-6 months, they should also introduce allergenic foods such as peanuts, egg, cow's milk products, tree nuts, wheat, shellfish, fish, and soy.
- Waiting to introduce allergenic foods may increase the risk of a baby developing a food allergy to that particular food, so don't delay!¹

HELPFUL TIP It's important that once allergenic foods are introduced, they stay in a baby's everyday diet. Parents can buy products that are a blend of these foods to make daily feeding easy. Make sure to look for products that cover a wide range of allergens, especially difficult to feed foods like shellfish or fish.

1. Tran MM, et al. *Pediatr Allergy Immunol.* 2017;28:471-477.



3

DIET DIVERSITY IS CRITICAL.

- This is the time to expose infants to many different foods. Babies may need to try a new food a number of times before they accept it. Don't be discouraged—this is totally normal!
- For breastfed infants: Make sure foods are rich in nutrients, such as iron (e.g., meats and seafood) and zinc (e.g., meats, beans, zinc-fortified infant cereals).

HELPFUL TIP Feed babies a diversity of nutrient-dense foods in infant-safe formats their first year of life. However, make sure to stay away from honey as well as unpasteurized foods and beverages, and limit foods with added sodium and sugars.



4

MAKE EVERY BITE COUNT.

- Infants consume small quantities of foods, so it's important to pay attention to the foods they are fed.
- Portion sizes are helpful to ensure adequate nutrient intake, but all babies are different. Parents should listen to a baby's cues of being hungry and satisfied. Let them be the guide on how much they should eat!

HELPFUL TIP More information on establishing healthy eating patterns in infants is available from: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).



5

BE MINDFUL OF BEVERAGES.

- In general, infants should not consume beverages outside of breast milk, formula and small amounts of water.
- Cow's milk or any plant-based beverages should not be offered as a drink in the first year of life.
- Fruit juice should not be consumed, even 100% fruit juice.

HELPFUL TIP Parents often wonder whether infants need to drink water. In fact, breast milk or formula should provide the hydration a baby needs in the first 6 months of life! Small amounts of water (up to 4 to 8 ounces per day) may be given when babies start solids. To help the transition from a bottle to a cup, offer formula, breast milk or water interchangeably from a cup. That way, infants learn that cups are not only meant for drinking water.

