

Chapter 6

Feeding Solid Foods



What's In This Chapter?

By the end of this chapter, child care providers will be able to:

- 1 Identify solid foods that are creditable as part of a reimbursable infant meal or snack in the CACFP.
- 2 Describe when a baby is developmentally ready to start eating solid foods.
- 3 Offer different textures of foods based upon the baby's feeding skills.
- 4 List strategies for when and how to communicate with parents about solid foods.



What are solid foods?

Solid foods are foods that are easy and safe for a baby to eat once he or she is developmentally ready, usually around 6 months of age. Solid foods can be pureed, mashed, ground, or finely chopped to allow a baby to swallow the food without choking. Solid foods are also known as **complementary foods**.

Before around 6 months of age, most babies do not have the muscle control and coordination to eat **solid foods**. They are not “**developmentally ready**.” When a baby is not developmentally ready to eat solid foods, he or she:

- is not able to sit in a high chair and hold his or her head up.
- may not be able to move his or her tongue to help swallow the food.
- may not open his or her mouth when foods come towards him or her.

For more information about when a baby is developmentally ready for solid foods, see **Chapter 1: Giving Babies a Healthy Start With the CACFP** on **page 6**.

These **feeding skills** are needed for the baby to eat solid foods. The **CACFP** infant meal pattern allows for solid foods starting around 6 months of age. The term “around” is used because not all babies are developmentally ready for solid foods at exactly 6 months of age. Some babies may be ready for solid foods at 5 months, others at 6½ months.

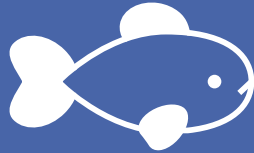
The amounts of solid foods listed in the infant meal pattern are provided as a range, such as 0–2 tablespoons. This provides you with the flexibility to offer the right amount of solid foods based upon the baby's developmental readiness. You would give 0 tablespoons of a solid food if the baby has not yet started eating solids. You might give the baby less than 1 tablespoon of a solid food if he or she just started eating a solid food. Once the baby has been introduced to the solid food, you would offer the baby the full 2 tablespoons of the solid food.

Solid Foods for Babies 6 Through 11 Months

The CACFP infant meal pattern for babies 6 through 11 months includes solid foods, such as:



iron-fortified dry infant cereals



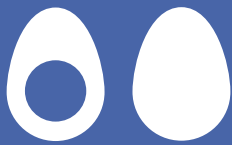
fish



poultry



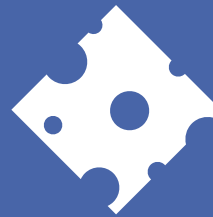
meats



whole eggs (yolk and whites)



cooked dry beans or peas



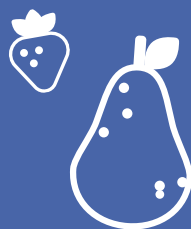
cheese and cottage cheese



yogurt



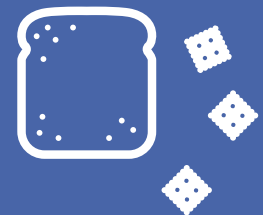
vegetables



fruits

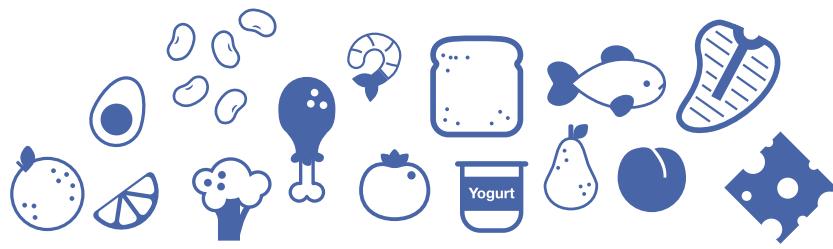


ready-to-eat cereals (snack only)



bread and crackers (snack only)

For more information on how these foods fit within the CACFP infant meal pattern, see **Table 3**, CACFP Infant Meal Pattern With Food Components in **Chapter 1: Giving Babies a Healthy Start With the CACFP** on **page 15**.



When To Start Feeding a Baby Solid Foods

How Can You Tell If It Is Time To Feed a Baby Solid Foods?



Talk with the baby's parents, so you know when they have started giving their baby solid foods. If

you've noticed signs that the baby is ready for solid foods, you may also want to share the "**For Parents: Is Your Baby Ready for Solid Foods?**" handout on **page 12** with parents. At this time, you may want to ask the baby's parents to provide a written note or response about starting or delaying solid foods.

A **medical statement** from the baby's **health care provider** is not required if parents choose to start their baby on solid foods or delay the start of solid foods.

If the parents inform you that the baby is eating solid foods, then you must serve solid foods in order to claim reimbursement for the infant meal or snack in the CACFP. You can also ask parents to fill out the "**For Parents: What Is Your Baby Eating? Let Us Know!**" handout on **page 63** so you can keep track of what the baby has tried or might try.

If the parents indicate that the baby is not yet eating solid foods, continue to offer the **infant** the required amount of breastmilk or **iron-fortified infant formula**. The infant meal is still **reimbursable** if solid foods are not served because the baby may not be developmentally ready for solids. Provide the parent with information on the benefits of offering the baby solid foods once the baby is developmentally ready. Encourage the parents to talk with their baby's health care provider about introducing solids. Ask the parents to let you know when they have started feeding their baby solid foods.

Is Baby Jonathan Ready for Solid Foods?

Baby Jonathan is 5 months old. He can sit when his mom is holding him tight, but he does not have good control of his head and neck. Jonathan's parents are not sure if he is ready for solid foods. The child care provider hands them the "**For Parents: Is Your Baby Ready for Solid Foods?**" handout on **page 12** to offer more information. They learn that since Baby Jonathan cannot sit up well and does not have good head and neck control, he is not ready for solid foods. They make a plan to watch for signs that he is ready for solids.

Feeding Solid Foods Too Early

Feeding solid foods before a baby is developmentally ready may increase the chance that he or she will:

- choke on the food.
- drink less breastmilk or infant formula than needed in order to grow.
- be overweight or obese later in life.

Feeding solid foods before a baby is ready:

- does not help the baby sleep through the night.
- does not make the baby eat fewer times in a day.

Did you know?

A baby crying often is not a sign that the baby is ready for solid foods. Babies eat often because their stomachs are very small and they are growing quickly. Breastmilk and formula can give the baby the nutrients he or she needs until around 6 months of age.

If parents report fussiness and/or sleeping problems as a reason for wanting to start solid foods early, encourage them to discuss their concerns with their baby's health care provider. Sometimes ideas for other ways to calm or soothe a crying baby can be helpful. Crying does not always mean that the baby is hungry.

Feeding Solid Foods Too Late

Delaying the introduction of solid foods beyond the time when babies are developmentally ready may prevent them from eating the variety and amounts of food they need. This may increase the risk that babies will:

- not get the nutrition they need, especially iron and zinc.
- not grow normally.
- reject foods when they are given at a later age.
- have delayed speech and **motor development**.

Delaying solid foods may not reduce the risk of developing food allergies. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 6 to 8 months of age is considered an important time for introducing solid foods to babies. By the time babies are 7 to 8 months of age, and if developmentally ready, they should be consuming solid foods from all CACFP food components such as vegetables, fruits, grains, and meat and meat alternates, along with breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula. Encourage parents to talk about solid foods with the baby's health care provider.





For Parents: What Is Your Baby Eating? Let Us Know!

Today's Date

Baby's Name (first and last)

Baby's Birth Date

Parent's Name (first and last)

Is your baby eating solid foods? Yes No

What texture(s) of food do you give to your baby?



pureed



mashed



ground



finely chopped

Which of these foods does your baby currently eat?

Grains

- crackers
- iron-fortified infant cereal (check all that apply)
 - barley cereal oat cereal
 - wheat cereal rice cereal
- ready-to-eat cereal (such as whole-grain o-shaped cereal)
- pieces of bread/toast pieces of pita bread pieces of soft tortilla

Meat and Meat Alternates (Protein Foods and Dairy)

- beans
- beef
- pork
- chicken
- cottage cheese
- eggs
- fish
- turkey
- cheese
- yogurt
- shellfish

Which of these foods does your baby currently eat?

Vegetables

- broccoli butternut squash cauliflower corn spinach peas
 carrots sweet potatoes tomatoes green beans other: _____

Fruits

- apples apricot bananas blueberries mangos
 peaches pears prunes strawberries other: _____

What else does your baby eat? _____

Parent's Signature: _____

A handout from *Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*
<https://teammnutrition.usda.gov> • FNS 786D • March 2019
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A Baby's Feeding Skills

Babies are born with feeding skills that allow them to drink breastmilk or infant formula. As babies get older, they develop new skills to eventually help them feed themselves with your supervision. Offering babies different **textures** of food as they get older helps them learn or strengthen different feeding skills.

See **Table 8**, Introducing Different Textures of Food Based on Feeding Skills on **page 68**.

Introducing New Foods

While it used to be thought that babies needed to try new foods in a certain order, we now know that is not the case. However, iron-fortified **infant cereals** and pureed meats are good first foods because they provide iron and zinc that babies need around 6 months of age. It is a recommended practice that parents introduce the baby to one new food at a time over the course of a few days. This allows parents to watch the baby closely for any allergic reactions to the food.



Encourage parents to keep you informed of any new foods they are offering their baby and any history of allergic reactions.

Remember, babies can still have a reaction to a food even if they did not have a reaction the first time they tried the food. Always pay close attention to the baby during feeding.

For more information on signs a baby is having an allergic reaction to food, see **Chapter 10: Food Allergies and Intolerances** on **page 119**.

Did you know?

Babies begin losing iron after birth and have a significantly lower amount by the time they are 6 months of age. For breastfed babies, it's especially important to introduce iron-fortified infant cereal and pureed meats or poultry when the baby is ready to eat solid foods because they provide iron and zinc that babies need as they grow.



What if a baby doesn't like a food when trying it for the first time?

Infants and children may not like a particular food the first few times trying it. Infants and children may need to be offered a new food more than 10 times before a child might like it. Do not give up! Continue to offer foods babies did not like the first time to see if they will give it another try.

How To Feed Solid Foods to a Baby



Child care provider feeding solid foods to a baby.

1. Look for signs of hunger before feeding a baby.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Spoon baby food from the jar or container and put it in a small bowl.
4. Wash the baby's hands and place the baby in an age-appropriate feeding chair. Have the baby eat with other children when possible.
5. Put a bib on the baby.
6. Sit with the baby while he or she is eating. Talk to the baby during the feeding and have good eye contact.
7. When the baby is developmentally ready, let the baby try feeding him or herself. Soft finger foods give babies a chance to feed themselves without assistance. You can also let the baby try eating with a spoon. Monitor the baby during eating for any signs of choking or allergic reactions.

Feed a baby from a bowl or plate instead of directly from the baby food container. If the spoon used for feeding is put back into the jar, bacteria in the baby's saliva can cause the food in the jar to spoil. If more food is needed from the container, always use a clean spoon to move it from the container to the baby's plate or bowl.



A baby showing signs of fullness.

How To Feed Solid Foods to a Baby (continued)

8. Help the baby practice drinking breastmilk or formula from a cup, if developmentally ready.
9. Talk to the baby in a soft and encouraging voice. Keep good eye contact and smile. Games and other disruptions can be distracting or overwhelming to a baby.
10. Watch for signs that the baby is full.
11. After feeding, wash the baby's hands and face. Remove the bib.
12. Discard uneaten food from bowls, trays, or bottles.

Offer the baby a variety of foods and textures that are appropriate for his or her feeding skills. See **Table 8**, Introducing Different Textures of Food Based on Feeding Skills on **page 68** for more information.

Do not heat the baby food container in a microwave. This may create "hot spots" in the food, which could burn the baby's mouth. If baby food has to be heated, pour the food into a bowl, plate, or pot and heat on the stove or with a food warmer until warm. Then, stir and test the temperature to make sure the food is not too hot before feeding.

Table 8

Introducing Different Textures of Food Based on Feeding Skills

	Birth – 5 Months	Around 6 – 8 Months	Around 8 – 12 Months
Feeding Skills	 <p>Baby can suck/swallow</p>	 <p>Baby can move food from spoon to back of mouth and swallow</p>	 <p>Baby can pick up pieces of foods with fingers</p>
Texture of Food	<p>Liquids (breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula)</p>	<p>Pureed and mashed soft solid foods</p> <p>Liquids (breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula)</p>	<p>Ground or finely chopped soft solid foods*</p> <p>Ready-to-eat cereal, such as whole-grain o-shaped cereal. Strips of breads. Small pieces of crackers.**</p> <p>Liquids (breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula)</p>
Feeding Style	 <p>Breastfeeding or bottle feeding</p>	 <p>Spoon-fed by you</p> <p>Introduce a cup</p>	 <p>Baby can feed self with a spoon or pick up finger foods</p>

*To help prevent choking, grind or finely chop foods to no more than ½ inch in size or cut into thin slices that can easily be chewed.

** Choose crackers without seeds, nuts, or whole grain kernels to avoid choking.

Preparing Foods in Different Textures

As a baby develops, it is important to give him or her the chance to try different textures of solid foods, moving from **pureed foods** to those that are mashed, ground, or finely chopped. This helps the baby develop feeding and chewing skills. It also helps the baby get used to the feel of different textures of foods in his or her mouth.

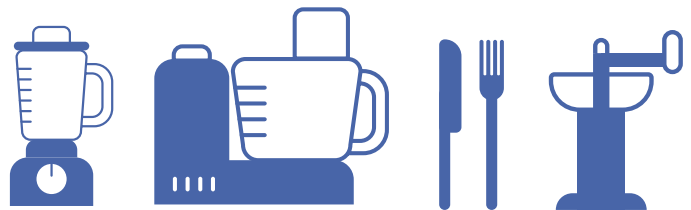
You can use fresh, cooked, canned, or frozen foods to make foods that are the right texture for the baby. Start by offering pureed solid foods and move to foods mashed by a fork, ground, or finely chopped. You can also buy baby foods that are different in texture.



Butternut squash being pureed in a food processor.

For more information on specific foods that should not be served to a baby, see **Chapter 9: Choking Prevention** on **page 114**.

Always cut foods to no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch size or cut into thin slices that can easily be chewed to avoid choking. Look at the shape, size, and texture of foods before serving them to babies.



Pureeing Foods

Pureed foods are foods that are blended to a very smooth texture. Iron-fortified infant cereal, vegetables, fruits, meats, poultry, and other solid foods can be blended with cooking liquid or water to puree the food so the texture is appropriate for a younger baby. As the baby gets older, add less liquid to create a thicker puree. If you are cooking for one baby, you can use breastmilk or infant formula to change the texture of the food. For packaged foods, like iron-fortified infant cereal, follow the preparation directions on the package.

Did you know?

Some vitamins, like B vitamins and vitamin C, can leak out of foods during cooking. Using the liquid leftover from cooking to puree foods allows you to add some of the vitamins back into the dish you are preparing!

Mashing Foods

Once a baby is used to pureed foods, **mashed foods** are a good texture to try next. Mashed foods are lumpier than pureed foods. Similar to pureed foods, iron-fortified infant cereal, vegetables, fruits, meats, poultry, and other solid foods can be mixed with cooking liquid or water before they are mashed with a fork or other kitchen equipment. If you are cooking for one baby, you can use breastmilk or infant formula to change the texture of the food.

Grinding and Finely Chopping Foods

At around 8 through around 12 months of age, the baby may be ready for new textures. Grind or finely chop or dice soft foods into small pieces, no larger than ½ inch, or thin slices to avoid choking. Foods should be easy for the baby to chew. At this time, the baby should be able to use his or her **pincer grasp** (thumb and index finger) to pick up the small pieces of food.

What Is a Reimbursable Infant Meal or Snack for Babies 6 Through 11 Months?

The infant meal pattern is made up of different food components, as shown in **Table 3**, CACFP Infant Meal Pattern With Food Components on **page 15**. From 0 through 5 months, breastmilk or infant formula is the only food component required. The infant meal pattern for babies that are 6 through 11 months includes solid foods as additional food components once the baby is developmentally ready. These additional solid food components include grains, meat and meat alternates, and vegetables and fruits. The food components are offered as part of a meal or snack, but since babies do not eat on a set schedule, the components may be offered throughout the course of the morning or afternoon. For example, a baby may eat part of his or her breakfast at 9 a.m. and more of his or her breakfast at 10:30 a.m. This is still reimbursable as the breakfast meal.

For more information on how to prepare different foods for babies, see **Chapter 7: Buying and Preparing Baby Foods** on **page 93**.



A baby using the pincer grasp to pick up a ready-to-eat cereal.

What Types of Grains Can Be Offered Under the Infant Meal Pattern?

Grains served must be made with **enriched** or whole-grain meal or flour. Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals and infant cereals that are fortified are also **creditable**. There is not a whole grain-rich requirement in the CACFP infant meal pattern.

See the “Grains” section of the “Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs” for information on how to determine if a grain is creditable in the CACFP. The “Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs” can be found online at <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov>.



Examples of grains in the infant meal pattern.

Dry Iron-Fortified Infant Cereal

Dry iron-fortified **infant cereal** is cereal that has iron added to it. Iron is an important nutrient for babies. Both single-grain infant cereal, such as wheat, oat, and barley, as well as mixed-grain infant cereal are creditable as long as they are iron-fortified. Babies should be given the single-grain iron-fortified infant cereal first to make sure he or she does not have an allergic reaction. If the baby does not have a reaction, then mixed-grain iron-fortified infant cereal can be offered.

INGREDIENTS: WHOLE GRAIN WHEAT FLOUR, WHOLE GRAIN OAT FLOUR, OAT FLOUR, RICE FLOUR, WHOLE GRAIN RYE FLOUR, VITAMINS AND MINERALS: CALCIUM CARBONATE, VITAMIN C (ASCORBIC ACID), **IRON (ELECTROLYTIC)**, ZINC SULFATE, VITAMIN E (ALPHA TOCOPHERYL ACETATE), NIACINAMIDE*, VITAMIN B2 (RIBOFLAVIN), VITAMIN B1 (THIAMIN MONONITRATE), VITAMIN B6 (PYRIDOXINE HYDROCHLORIDE), VITAMIN B12, FOLIC ACID*.

How Can I Tell If an Infant Cereal Is Iron-Fortified?

To tell if an infant cereal is “iron-fortified,” look at the ingredients list on the back of the infant cereal package. As long as one of the ingredients listed is “iron,” “ferric fumarate,” “electrolytic iron,” or “iron (electrolytic),” then the cereal is iron-fortified.

Did you know?

Arsenic is found naturally in water, soil, and some foods, including infant rice cereal. If eaten over a long period of time it can be harmful. The Food and Drug Administration encourages parents to follow the American Academy of Pediatrics advice and feed babies a variety of grains to make sure babies are not eating too much arsenic.



Example of a ready-to-eat cereal.

Ready-to-Eat Cereals

Ready-to-eat cereals include flakes, rounds, and o-shaped cereals that older babies can pick up and eat. These cereals can only credit towards snacks, not meals. The cereal must not contain more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce of cereal and must be iron-fortified. Some ready-to-eat cereals may be a choking hazard. Choose cereals that dissolve easily in the mouth and do not include nuts, dried fruits, or other hard food items.

If you use a cereal from a WIC-approved cereal list, make sure the ready-to-eat cereal is made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour or is fortified.

How Can I Tell When a Cereal Only Has 6 Grams of Sugar or Less Per Dry Ounce of Cereal?

Almost all infant cereals meet this sugar limit, and there are many types of ready-to-eat cereal that meet this sugar limit as well. There are a couple of ways to figure out if a cereal meets the sugar requirement. You can:

- Use any cereal that is listed on any **State agency's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**-approved cereal list, found as part of the State's approved food lists.
- Use the chart in USDA Team Nutrition's training worksheet "Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars." The worksheet includes the chart on **page 73** with common breakfast cereal serving sizes and the maximum amount of sugar the breakfast cereal may contain per serving. This worksheet can be found in **Appendix D: Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars** on **page 145** or online at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-training-tools>.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 3/4 cup (30g)	
Servings Per Container about 15	
Amount Per Serving	Cereal
Calories 100	100
Calories from Fat 5	5
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g	
Monounsaturated Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 140mg	6%
Potassium 90mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 22g	7%
Dietary Fiber 3g	11%
Sugars 5g	
Other Carbohydrate 14g	
Protein 3g	

Find the serving size and sugars line on the Nutrition Facts label. In **Table 9**, Sugar Limits for Ready-to-Eat Cereals, look at the number to the right of the serving size amount. If the cereal has that amount of sugar, or less, your cereal meets the sugar requirement.



Baby eating a ready-to-eat cereal at snack.

Table 9 Sugar Limits for Ready-to-Eat Cereals

Serving Size	Sugars
If the serving size is:	Sugars cannot be more than:
0–2 grams	0 grams
3–7 grams	1 gram
8–11 grams	2 grams
12–16 grams	3 grams
17–21 grams	4 grams
22–25 grams	5 grams
26–30 grams	6 grams
31–35 grams	7 grams
36–40 grams	8 grams
41–44 grams	9 grams
45–49 grams	10 grams

Serving Size	Sugars
If the serving size is:	Sugars cannot be more than:
50–54 grams	11 grams
55–58 grams	12 grams
59–63 grams	13 grams
64–68 grams	14 grams
69–73 grams	15 grams
74–77 grams	16 grams
78–82 grams	17 grams
83–87 grams	18 grams
88–91 grams	19 grams
92–96 grams	20 grams
97–100 grams	21 grams

Breads and Crackers



Thin slices and pieces of bread no larger than ½ inch.

Strips or small pieces of breads and crackers may credit towards snacks under the infant meal pattern. These include, but are not limited to:

- Small strips or pieces of dry bread or toast, such as whole-wheat, French or Italian bread
- Small pieces of crackers without seeds, nuts, or whole grain kernels
- Small pieces of soft tortilla or soft pita bread
- Teething crackers, biscuits, and toasts
- Small pieces of English muffins
- Small pieces of rolls
- Small pieces of cornbread or corn muffins

What Types of Meats and Meat Alternates Can Be Offered Under the Infant Meal Pattern?

Meats and Poultry

Meats and poultry, including beef, pork, lamb, veal, chicken, and turkey, are creditable in the CACFP infant meal pattern. Like iron-fortified infant cereals, meats and poultry are good first foods for babies because they provide iron and zinc that babies need around 6 months of age.

- All meats must be USDA inspected.
- **Store-bought baby food** meats made with broth or gravy are creditable in the CACFP.

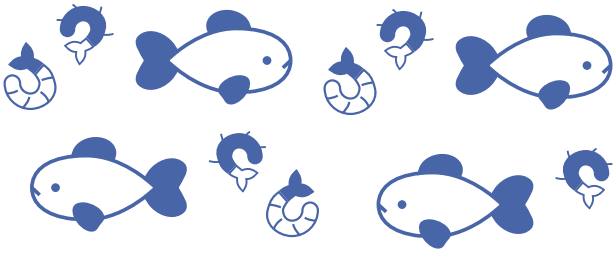


Fin Fish and Shellfish

Both fin fish and shellfish purchased from a commercial source may be offered to infants 6 through 11 months old when developmentally ready for solid foods. These include salmon, trout, flounder, cod, haddock, perch, tilapia, crab, shrimp, and other fish and shellfish. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, there is no evidence that waiting to introduce common allergens, such as fish or shellfish, beyond 4 to 6 months of age will prevent a food allergy.

Remove any bones or shells and modify the texture of the fish and shellfish based upon the feeding skills of the baby.

Help parents learn about other sources of iron by giving them the "**For Parents: Making Sure Your Baby Gets Enough Iron**" handout on **page 76**.



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that pregnant women and young children avoid eating fish that typically have higher mercury levels. These include:

- shark
- swordfish
- king mackerel
- tilefish
- bigeye tuna
- orange roughy
- marlin

Home-caught fish is only creditable if it meets State or local public health policies regarding food safety.

See the “Meat/Meat Alternates” section in the “Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs” for information on processed fish products, such as fish sticks. The “Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs” can be found online at <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov>.

Cheese

Pasteurized cheeses that meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s standard of identity for cheese² are allowed under the infant meal pattern for 6 through 11 months. This can include:

- Pasteurized processed American cheese
- Natural cheddar or Colby cheeses
- Monterey jack or mozzarella (part skim or whole) cheeses
- Muenster and provolone cheeses
- Cottage cheese

Cheese food, cheese spread, and cheese product are not creditable under the infant meal pattern because they are generally higher in salt and lower in protein.

Tip:

Information about mercury levels in specific fish can be found at the Food and Drug Administration food safety website, found here: <https://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodbornellnessContaminants/Metals/default.htm>. You can also contact your State or local health department or call 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366) for more information.



Caution. Never feed babies dairy products made from raw, unpasteurized milk. Unpasteurized milk products may contain harmful bacteria that can cause the baby to be very sick.

²Food and Drug Administration. 21 CFR Part 133. 2012.

For Parents: Making Sure Your Baby Gets Enough Iron

Iron is one of the key nutrients babies need during their first year of life. Iron helps to transport oxygen throughout the body, which is important for a baby's growth and brain development.

Babies that are only breastfed typically run out of the iron they are born with between 4 and 6 months of age. Your baby's health care provider may give your baby an iron supplement until your baby is ready for solid foods. When your baby is ready for solid foods, make sure your baby is eating foods that contain iron.

Good Sources of Iron:



Iron-fortified infant formula



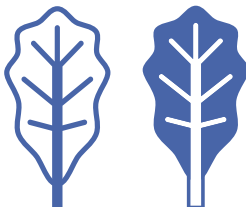
Fortified ready-to-eat cereals



Chicken



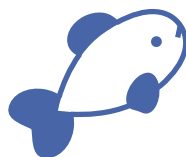
Iron-fortified infant cereal



Leafy green vegetables



Beef



Fish

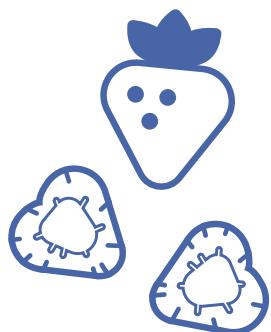


Beans

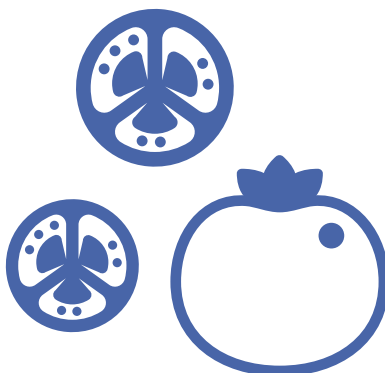
Continue reading on the back of this handout about good sources of vitamin C to pair with the iron-rich foods on this page.

Good Sources of Vitamin C

Vitamin C helps our bodies absorb iron! When you serve a baby iron-rich foods like the ones on the front of this handout, pair them with foods that contain vitamin C. Remember to prepare the following foods to the right texture and size to prevent choking.



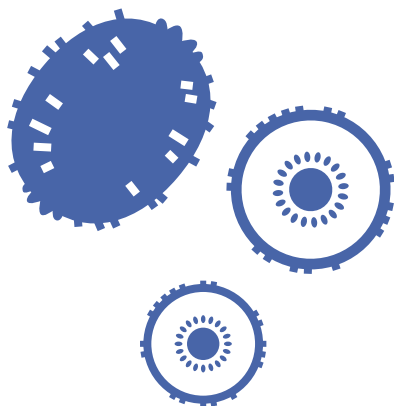
Strawberries



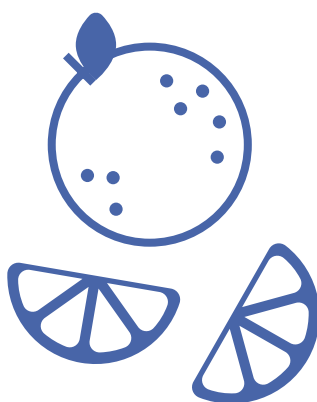
Tomatoes



Cooked red peppers



Kiwi



Oranges



Cooked broccoli

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Eggs

Shell eggs or liquid pasteurized whole eggs may be offered as part of a reimbursable meal or snack. Eggs must be federally inspected. There is no evidence that waiting to introduce egg whites beyond 4 through 6 months of age will prevent a food allergy. The whole egg, including both the egg yolk and the egg white, must be served in order for it to be creditable.

Cooked Dry Beans and Peas

Any cooked dry beans and peas, such as lentils, black beans, pinto beans, or chickpeas, may be served to babies who are developmentally ready to accept them. This includes canned beans and peas. Look for those labeled “reduced sodium.” Puree or mash beans and peas to avoid choking. Green peas are not considered a meat alternate.

Nuts and Seeds

Nuts, seeds, peanut butter, and other nut or seed butters are not creditable as part of a reimbursable infant meal.

Did you know?

If you serve cooked dry beans and peas, they can be credited as a vegetable or meat alternate in the infant meal pattern. However, cooked dry beans and peas cannot be credited as both a vegetable and a meat alternate in the same meal. This also applies to canned beans and peas.



A boiled egg diced with the yolk and egg white.

Processed Meats

Processed meats and poultry such as hot dogs (frankfurters), infant meat and poultry sticks (not dried or semi-dried, like jerky), chicken nuggets, fish sticks, and sausage can be part of a reimbursable meal to give greater flexibility to the menu planner. However, they are not recommended. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting these foods because they are higher in sodium than other meat products. Some forms of these foods may cause choking, such as hot dogs cut into rounds. Instead, offer babies plain meats, poultry, fish, and eggs that have been changed to be the right texture (pureed, mashed, ground, finely chopped, etc.) for the baby based on his or her development. Remember to always cut foods into thin slices, and no larger than ½ inch, to prevent choking.

Tofu

Tofu is not creditable as part of a reimbursable infant meal.

Yogurt

Store-bought low-fat, reduced-fat, and whole milk yogurts are creditable under the infant meal pattern for babies 6 through 11 months.

Homemade yogurts are not creditable. The yogurt must be pasteurized and meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's standard of identity for whole,³ low-fat,⁴ or non-fat⁵ yogurt. Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces of yogurt. See **Table 10**, Sugar Limits for Yogurt on **page 80** for more information.

- Soy yogurt is not creditable as part of the infant meal pattern.
- Yogurt with fruit is creditable in the infant meal pattern if it meets the sugar limit.
- Yogurt products, such as frozen yogurt, drinkable or liquid yogurt products, yogurt smoothies, homemade yogurt, yogurt flavored products, yogurt bars, and freeze-dried yogurt snacks are not creditable.

How Can I Tell When a Yogurt Has No More Than 23 Grams of Sugar Per 6 Ounces?

To help you identify yogurts with no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces, you can:

- Use the chart in USDA Team Nutrition's training worksheet "Choose Yogurts That Are Lower in Added Sugars." The worksheet includes the chart on **page 80** with common yogurt serving sizes, including ounces and grams, and the maximum amount of sugar the yogurt may contain per serving. This worksheet can be found in **Appendix E: Choose Yogurts That Are Lower in Added Sugars** on **page 147** or online at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp-meal-pattern-training-tools>.

Tip:

Soy yogurt and tofu are not creditable as part of a reimbursable meal or snack in the infant meal pattern.



Child care provider feeding yogurt to a baby.

³Food and Drug Administration. 21 CFR 131.200. 1999.

⁴Food and Drug Administration. 21 CFR 131.203. 1999.

⁵Food and Drug Administration. 21 CFR 131.206. 1999.

Table 10 Sugar Limits for Yogurt

Serving Size Ounces (oz.)	Serving Size Grams (g.) (Use when the serving size is not listed in ounces)	Sugars
If the serving size is:		Sugars must not be more than:
1 oz.	28 g.	4 g.
1.25 oz.	35 g.	5 g.
1.5 oz.	43 g.	6 g.
1.75 oz.	50 g.	7 g.
2 oz.	57 g.	8 g.
2.25 oz.	64 g.	9 g.
2.5 oz.	71 g.	10 g.
2.75 oz.	78 g.	11 g.
3 oz.	85 g.	11 g.
3.25 oz.	92 g.	12 g.
3.5 oz.	99 g.	13 g.
3.75 oz.	106 g.	14 g.
4 oz.	113 g.	15 g.
4.25 oz.	120 g.	16 g.
4.5 oz.	128 g.	17 g.
4.75 oz.	135 g.	18 g.
5 oz.	142 g.	19 g.
5.25 oz.	149 g.	20 g.
5.3 oz.	150 g.	20 g.
5.5 oz.	156 g.	21 g.
5.75 oz.	163 g.	22 g.
6 oz.	170 g.	23 g.
6.25 oz.	177 g.	24 g.
6.5 oz.	184 g.	25 g.
6.75 oz.	191 g.	26 g.
7 oz.	198 g.	27 g.
7.25 oz.	206 g.	28 g.
7.5 oz.	213 g.	29 g.
7.75 oz.	220 g.	30 g.
8 oz.	227 g.	31 g.

What Types of Vegetables and Fruits Can Be Offered Under the Infant Meal Pattern?

Vegetables and Fruits

All vegetables and fruits can be offered to babies. They contain important nutrients and fiber. To avoid choking, remember to cook and prepare vegetables and fruits to the appropriate texture. Remove all pits, seeds, skins, and peels before serving the food. Always cut vegetables and fruits into thin slices, and no larger than ½ inch, to prevent choking.

- Fruit and vegetable juices, even 100% juice, are not creditable under the infant meal pattern.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that homegrown spinach, beets, turnips, carrots, and collard greens should not be fed to infants less than 6 months of age. These foods may contain high levels of nitrates. This can cause a condition which can make it harder for a baby's blood to carry oxygen throughout the body.

Caution. Remove pits, seeds, skins, and peels from vegetables and fruits before serving.

Encourage parents to offer a variety of vegetables to their baby for healthy growth and development. You can use the "**For Parents: Varying Your Baby's Veggies**" handout on **page 88** to help parents keep track of the vegetables their baby has tried.



What Other Types of Foods Are or Are Not Creditable in the Infant Meal Pattern?

Desserts

Grain-based desserts such as cookies, sweet pie crusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies, including baby food varieties of these items, are not creditable as part of a reimbursable meal in the CACFP. These foods are high in saturated fats and added sugars.

Honey

Honey may contain bacteria that can cause infant botulism. Infant botulism is a serious illness that can make a baby very sick. Babies are at a higher risk of getting infant botulism until they turn 1 year old. Therefore, honey should never be fed to babies younger than one. This includes honey served on its own, as a topping for other foods, or cooked or baked into other foods. Also avoid serving store-bought foods made with honey, including honey graham crackers, cereals with honey, etc.



Make sure babies have tried all food ingredients before serving a mixed dish.

Table Foods

If you have older babies in your care (about 10 through 12 months) they may be ready to try foods that older children and adults are also eating, known as table foods. This can be helpful if you are a family child care provider and want to cook the same foods for all the children in your care.

You may need to cook foods for the baby a little longer so it is softer. You may also need to cut it into smaller pieces for babies. For example, the baby can have some of the sweet potato you're making for older children as long as you cook that portion just a bit longer—until it's soft—and mash or chop it into small pieces no larger than ½ inch.

If you are offering a mixed dish, first make sure the baby has tried all of the food ingredients before. With some dishes like soup, you may be able to separate out some of the cooked ingredients, such as cooked vegetables or meat, and change their texture further if needed. If your dish has foods that do not credit towards a reimbursable meal under the infant meal pattern, such as the noodles in lasagna, the food can still be served to the baby. Only the ingredients that are creditable in the infant meal pattern, such as cheese, meat, poultry, or vegetables, will count towards the reimbursable meal.

Artificial Sweeteners

Artificial sweeteners or sugar substitutes (such as aspartame, sucralose, stevia, saccharin, and others) can be found in low-calorie foods and drinks. These are not recommended for babies.

Babies grow quickly and need many nutrients for their health and development. To help build taste preferences for a variety of foods, it is important to introduce babies to different tastes and textures, and not just those that are sweet. For this reason, you may want to limit serving foods with both natural sweeteners and artificial sweeteners to infants.



Tip:

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends introducing single ingredient foods to babies first before giving a mix of foods, or combination foods. Once the baby has tried each ingredient in a mixed food without having an allergic reaction, then the baby can try the combination food. For example, if you want to serve scrambled eggs with cheese, make sure the baby has tried eggs and cheese separately before serving the two mixed together.

Even after a baby starts eating solid food, breastmilk and iron-fortified infant formula are still the best beverages to offer babies at meals and snacks.

Added Sugars, Fats, and Sodium

Taste preferences and eating habits are formed early in a child's life. It is important to offer a baby food that is lower in added sugar, saturated fat, and sodium (salt). Sweetened foods and foods high in saturated fat can make a baby feel full without providing the key nutrients he or she needs for healthy growth.

As a reminder, grain-based desserts are not creditable in the CACFP infant meal pattern. Grain-based desserts are food items such as cookies, brownies, granola bars, etc.

For a longer list of grain-based desserts, see "Desserts" on **page 81**.

For a full list of beverages and foods that are creditable and non-creditable, see **Appendix F: Infant Foods List**, on **page 149**. For more information on beverages, see **Table 7, What Should Babies Drink?** on **page 55**.

See **Table 11, When a Baby Is Eating Solid Foods** on **page 84** for an example of parent-provided food components.

Tip:

Cow's milk, goat's milk, soy milk, sodas, sports drinks, fruit drinks, sugar water, juice (even 100% juice), tea, and coffee should not be offered to babies at your **child care site**.

Food Components Provided by the Parents

A food component provided by parents may also credit toward the reimbursable meal. For babies who are eating solid foods, there are two options to claim reimbursement.

1. If the parent provides breastmilk or a creditable infant formula for the baby, then your child care site must provide all of the solid food components in order for the meal to be reimbursable.
2. If the parent provides a solid food component for a baby, then your child care site must provide a creditable iron-fortified infant formula and all other solid food components.



Breastmilk provided by parents.

Table 11

When a Baby Is Eating Solid Foods

If a parent brings in...	You must offer...
Breastmilk	All other solid food components
Iron-fortified infant formula	All other solid food components
A solid food component (for example, pureed meat)	Iron-fortified infant formula All other solid food components

Special Dietary Needs Due to Disabilities

As a child care site participating in the CACFP, you must make substitutions to meals for participants with a disability. If the food you offer does not meet the needs of a baby with a disability due to special dietary needs, then another food item within the same food component can be substituted by you or the parents. For example, if a baby in your care cannot eat peaches, you can provide another fruit such as apples, pears, or bananas as part of the reimbursable meal. You should always try to find a substitution. However, if the baby's health care provider writes a medical statement that notes the baby cannot eat any foods in that food component, then you do not have to serve that food component. If the substitution is due to a disability or special dietary need, the medical statement must include the name of the food(s) to be avoided, explain how the food(s) affects the

baby, and be signed by the baby's health care provider. Recommended substitutions of food(s) can also be included on the medical statement. Keep the medical statement on file in a secure location at your child care site.

Special Dietary Needs Due to Religious Reasons

If a parent requests a meal change due to religious reasons, then another food item within the same food component can be substituted by you or the parents. For example, if the parents do not want their baby to eat pork, then a different meat or meat alternate can replace the pork for that meal. In this case, the meal would still be reimbursable. It is recommended to have a parent's note and signature on file showing that this request was made. A medical statement is not needed.

Feeding Solid Foods to Vegetarian or Vegan Babies



Baby eating pureed black beans.

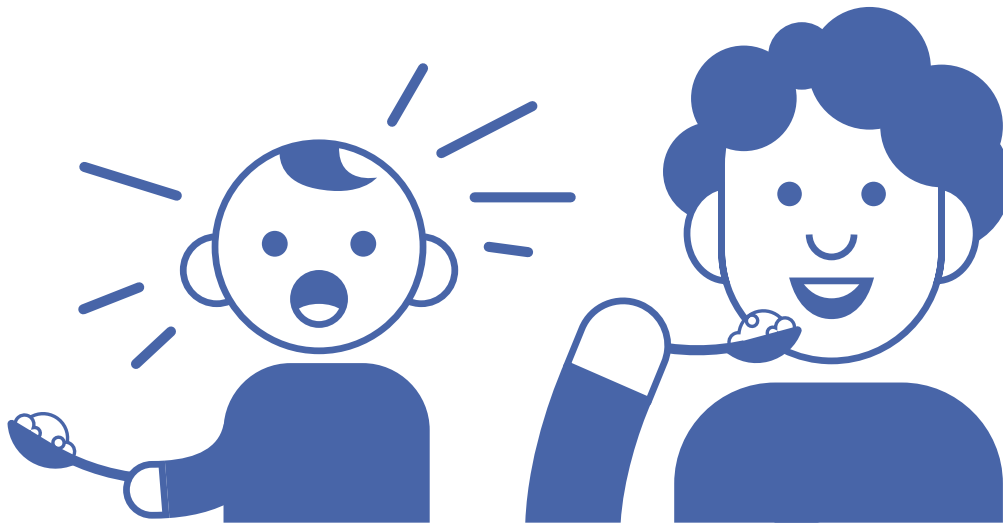
If parents have indicated that the baby is following a vegetarian or vegan eating pattern, you can still offer meals and snacks that fit within the infant meal pattern. The parents may provide an iron-fortified, soy-based infant formula without a medical statement, if desired. Cow's milk, soy milk, rice milk, almond milk, hemp milk, and homemade formulas may not credit towards a reimbursable infant meal or snack because they are missing important nutrients for healthy growth and development.

A baby following a vegetarian eating pattern may be offered pureed or mashed beans, cheese, yogurt, or whole eggs. Tofu and soy yogurt may not credit towards a reimbursable meal without a medical statement, but you or the parents may choose to serve them as additional food items.

Nut and seed butters are also not creditable towards a reimbursable meal under the infant meal pattern. Chunks of nut or seed butters pose a choking risk for infants.

At 12 months of age, vegan infants can be transitioned from infant formula to soy milk that is nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. Babies can also continue to receive breastmilk in place of fluid cow's milk after 1 year of age.





Be a Role Model at Mealtime

You can model how to eat new foods for the baby! Mealtimes provide a chance to show how to use a spoon or fork to eat a small amount of food. Show your enjoyment of the food by smiling and using a positive tone of voice. If older children eat meals with the baby at the child care site, encourage them to also model good eating behaviors for the baby. This can help create a positive and encouraging eating environment.



Tip:

The CACFP does not require that you provide a daily activity chart, but it is a great way to communicate with parents!

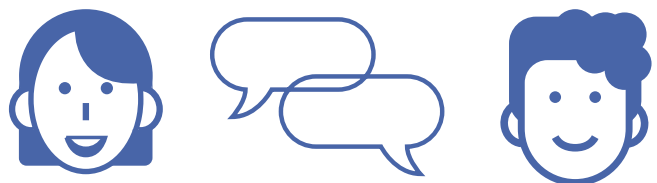
See **Appendix A: Sample Infant Daily Activity Chart** on **page 139** for an example of a daily activity chart you can use to share information with parents.



Keep parents updated on how feeding is going.

Keep Parents Updated

You and the parents are a team when it comes to feeding the baby. You need information from parents about what solid foods to feed to the baby, and they need to know how feeding is going at the child care site and how much the baby is eating. One way to share this information with parents is through a daily activity chart. The chart could include things like what the baby ate, bowel movements, number of wet and dirty diapers, number and length of naps, and other important notes.



For Child Care Providers: Feeding Babies in Their First Year

Baby's age	When baby can:	Serve these foods in the CACFP:
Birth through 5 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only suck and swallow 	<p>Liquids Only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastmilk • Iron-fortified infant formula
Around 6 months through 8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw in upper or lower lip as spoon is removed from mouth • Move tongue up and down • Sit up with support • Swallow soft solid foods without choking • Open the mouth when they see food • Drink from a cup with help, with spilling 	<p>Serve liquids above and add solid foods when babies are developmentally ready, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked, plain pureed/mashed vegetables • Plain pureed/mashed fruit • Plain pureed/mashed meat and meat alternates (dairy and protein foods): meat, poultry, fish, whole eggs, cheese, yogurt, and cooked dry beans and peas • Iron-fortified infant cereals, bread, small pieces of crackers
Around 8 months through 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move tongue from side to side • Begin spoon feeding themselves with help • Begin to chew and have some teeth • Begin to hold food and use their fingers to feed themselves • Drink from a cup with help, with less spilling 	<p>Serve liquids and foods above, and add: A variety of new solid foods and textures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortified ready-to-eat cereal, teething biscuits, crackers, and toasts • Finely chopped vegetables • Finely chopped fruit • Finely chopped meat and meat alternates (dairy and protein foods): meat, poultry, fish, whole eggs, cheese, yogurt, and cooked dry beans and peas













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For Parents: Varying Your Baby's Veggies

Giving your baby a variety of vegetables is a great way to introduce different flavors and nutrients into your baby's diet. You can start by giving your baby thinner pureed vegetables. Introduce thicker and lumpier vegetables as he or she gets older. This includes mashed, ground, and finely chopped foods.

What Face Does Your Baby Make When Trying These Foods?

Circle the face that looks like the face your baby made when trying the new food.

Age	Around 6–8 Months		Around 8–12 Months
Texture of Food	Pureed	Mashed	Ground/Finely Chopped
	<p>Pureed sweet potato</p>  <p>What face did your baby make?</p> 	<p>Mashed avocado</p>  <p>What face did your baby make?</p> 	<p>Chopped green beans</p>  <p>What face did your baby make?</p> 
	<p>Pureed peas</p>  <p>What face did your baby make?</p> 	<p>Mashed broccoli</p>  <p>What face did your baby make?</p> 	<p>Chopped cooked zucchini</p>  <p>What face did your baby make?</p> 

Pureed black beans



What face did your baby make?



Mashed carrots



What face did your baby make?



Chopped cooked bell pepper



What face did your baby make?



Pureed summer squash



What face did your baby make?



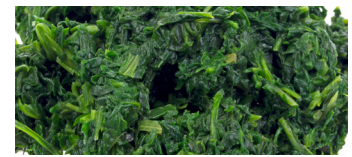
Mashed tomatoes



What face did your baby make?



Chopped cooked spinach



What face did your baby make?



Pureed butternut squash



What face did your baby make?



Mashed chickpeas



What face did your baby make?



Chopped squash



What face did your baby make?



It's okay if your baby makes this face 😐 or this one 😞 after you let them try a new food! You may have to offer a food more than 10 times before your baby might like it. Don't give up—keep offering these foods to your baby! One day your baby may like the food and will make this face 😊.

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It's Never Too Early To
Sing and Read to Babies!

A baby can learn as soon as he or she is born! Singing and reading to a baby are great ways to introduce new words to help him or her learn to talk and eventually write and read. Singing and reading about healthy foods provides a great opportunity to reinforce healthy eating habits in infants and children.

Here is a list of books* about vegetables, fruits, and other healthy foods to get you started:

- "Fruit" by Sara Anderson
- "Vegetables" by Sara Anderson
- "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" by Eric Carle
- "My Very First Book of Food" by Eric Carle
- "My Food / Mi Comida" by Rebecca Emberley
- "Eating the Alphabet" by Lois Ehlert
- "Farmer's Market Book" by the Manhattan Toy Company



Child care provider reading to a baby.

*Mention of these books is not an endorsement by the United States Department of Agriculture over other books that may be available on this subject.

In This Chapter

In this chapter, you have learned about how to feed a baby solid foods. This information will be used in the next chapter when you learn about buying and preparing baby foods.



Communicate often with parents to find out about new solid foods that their baby is eating at home.



Encourage parents to introduce a variety of vegetables to their baby for healthy growth and development.



Textures of solid foods should be modified based on the baby's development. As babies develop, they need the opportunity to move from pureed foods to finely chopped soft foods.



It is normal for a baby to reject a new food. New foods may need to be offered more than 10 times before a baby might like it.



Iron-fortified infant cereals, meats, eggs, and poultry provide iron that babies need starting around 6 months for healthy development.

Check Your Knowledge

1. Which foods are creditable in the infant meal pattern and can be offered to infants around 6 through 11 months? **Choose all that apply.**

- A** Soy yogurt
- B** Pureed carrots
- C** Finely chopped baked chicken
- D** Granola bar

2. You are talking to a father who wants you to start offering solid foods to his baby at your child care site. What tool can you use to help gather information on the types of food the baby has already been introduced to?

3. You are serving older children fat-free (skim) milk, pancakes, and strawberries for breakfast. Which foods can you serve the 10-month-old in your program in order to claim reimbursement for the breakfast meal? **Choose all that apply:**

- A** Fat-free (skim) milk
- B** Breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula
- C** Pancakes
- D** Finely chopped strawberries
- E** Iron-fortified infant cereal

ANSWERS: 1. B and C • 2. **For Parents:** What Is Your Baby Eating? Let Us Know! handout on **page 63** • 3. B, D, E. However, a pancake can be served at snack and be claimed for reimbursement since it is a bread-like item. Ready-to-eat cereals, bread, and crackers can be served at snack only. For more information, see "pancakes" in **Appendix F:** Infant Foods List on **page 170.**