Eating Through Meal Patterns
Child and Adult Care Food Program

Infant Meal Patterns

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is updating infant meal patterns on October 1, 2017 to encourage introducing solid foods to infants around 6 months of age as developmentally appropriate. This includes changing the three infant age groups to two (0-5 and 6-11 months) and adding and removing several foods from the infant meal patterns.

Introducing Solid Foods

The Dos and Don’ts of Feeding Infants

- **Do** provide meals to all infants enrolled in your care that comply with the infant meal patterns.
- **Do** introduce solid foods gradually around 6 months of age as developmentally appropriate.
- **Do** work closely with parents and guardians when introducing new foods.
- **Don’t** feed infants on a strict schedule. Pay attention to hunger and fullness cues.
- **Don’t** claim infant meals if parents provide more than one component. They will not be creditable.

Why introduce foods around 6 months of age?
There is a critical window between 6-8 months when it is easiest to introduce solid foods. If solid foods are introduced too early, there’s a high risk of choking, and infants’ digestive systems are not fully developed. If solid foods are introduced too late, infants may be less likely to accept them and may not be receiving the nutrition they need. By around 7-8 months infants should be eating a variety of solid foods from all of the food groups.

How to determine developmental readiness for solid foods?
There is no single best way to determine whether infants are ready for solid foods, but these are a few helpful signs:

- Sitting up with good head control;
- Opening his/her mouth when food is coming;
- Watching others eat, reaching for food, and seeming eager to be fed;
- Moving food from a spoon into his/her throat; and
- Doubling his/her weight since birth; or
- Weighing 13 pounds or more.

The new CACFP Meal Patterns go into effect on October 1, 2017.

For more information, visit us on the web at www.acdkids.org or like us on Facebook!
Graduating to New Textures
As infants begin trying new foods, developing eating skills, and growing teeth, they will be able to graduate to new textures and consistencies of food.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Texture &amp; Consistency</th>
<th>Foods to Try</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 through 9 months</td>
<td>Strained or pureed, eventually mashed</td>
<td>• Single-grain infant cereal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strained, pureed, or eventually mashed soft-cooked fruits/vegetables</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pureed meat or poultry</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 through 11 months</td>
<td>Ground or finely chopped</td>
<td>• Soft-cooked vegetables, fruits, dry beans or dry peas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tiny pieces of meat, poultry, fish, cheese, or whole egg*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cottage cheese or yogurt*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 through 12 months</td>
<td>Chopped</td>
<td>• Small pieces of soft peeled fruit or soft vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Small pieces of meat, poultry, fish, cheese, or whole egg*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cottage cheese or yogurt*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Finger foods such as cereal*, crackers, or pieces of bread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These foods will be creditable for infants starting October 1, 2017.

Coming Soon...

**On-site Breastfeeding**—Providers will be able to receive reimbursement for meals when a breastfeeding mother comes to the child care center or home and directly breastfeeds her infant.

**Fruits and Vegetables**—Infant snack will require a vegetable, fruit, or both for infants 6 through 11 months as developmentally appropriate. See ACD’s fruit and vegetable guide for more information about choosing infant fruits and vegetables.

**Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals**—Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals will be able to be claimed for infants 6 through 11 months as developmentally appropriate. Breakfast cereals will need to contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce of cereal (21.2 grams of sugar per 100 grams of cereal). See ACD’s breakfast guide for more information about creditable breakfast cereals.

**Yogurt**—Yogurt will be able to be claimed for infants 6 through 11 months as developmentally appropriate. Yogurts will need to contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces of yogurt. See ACD’s yogurt guide for more information about choosing creditable yogurts.

**Whole Egg**—Whole eggs (the white and yolk) will be able to be claimed for infants 6 through 11 months as developmentally appropriate. Previously only yolk could be claimed for infants.

**Cheese Food and Cheese Spread**—Cheese food and cheese spread will no longer be creditable for infants. These foods include products such as Easy Cheese, Velveeta, and Cheez Whiz. Regular cheese will continue to be creditable as well as many other meat/meat alternate options for infants.

**Fruit Juice**—Fruit juice will no longer be creditable for infants of any age because fruit juice offers no benefits over fruit. It has more sugar and less fiber than fruit.
**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Can solid foods be served to infants younger than 6 months?**
   Yes. Solid foods can be served as infants are developmentally ready, but most infants will not be ready until around 6 months. Documentation is recommended but not required. It is best to communicate closely with parents/guardians and discuss signs of developmental readiness.

2. **What happens if an infant is not eating solid foods by 8 months?**
   Infants are typically ready for solid food before 8 months, but there are exceptions. Providers and parents should work together to decide when to serve solid foods based on developmental readiness. Parents/guardians may want to consult a pediatrician if their child still does not seem ready to eat solid foods by 8 months.

3. **What should a home or center do if an infant is ready for solid foods but parents refuse?**
   Child care homes and centers should engage with parents to discuss signs that infants are ready and encourage them to begin introducing solid foods. Ultimately, introducing solid foods is up to the parents. If they continue to refuse, child care homes and centers can still be reimbursed.

4. **If an infant is just starting to be introduced to solid foods, does the home or center need to serve that solid food at every meal where that component is required?**
   It depends. Solid foods are introduced gradually so it may be appropriate to serve the solid food only once per day. The infant does not need to be offered a solid food component that is part of every meal until the infant is used to that solid food component.

5. **How should homes and centers document infant menus when they vary so widely?**
   Child care homes and centers can have a standard infant menu and adapt it for each infant as needed. All infants must be served breast milk or infant formula, but not all infants should be served solid foods unless they are developmentally ready.

6. **Can I wait until children are one year old to serve solid foods?**
   Child care homes and centers should introduce solid foods when infants are developmentally ready to accept them. Creditable infant menus including solid foods should be documented.

7. **Is there a whole grain-rich requirement for infants?**
   No. The once per day whole grain-rich requirement only applies to children 1 year and older.

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**Feeding Infants: A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs**


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