



## Guide for Infant Feeding: Introduction of Solid Foods

### Strategies for helping mothers introduce solid foods when infants are developmentally ready (4-6 months)\*

This guide has been developed to assist health care professionals, educators, and others working with mothers/caregivers around early infant feeding issues. You can use this guide to understand what the mother may be thinking and how you might address her concerns. It uses the mother's readiness to learn and motivation to change her behavior.

Mother's Readiness	Mother/Caregiver's State of Mind	Mother/Caregiver's Role	Provider's Role
<p><b>Precontemplation</b></p> <p><i>Does not believe waiting to give solids til 4-6 mo. is necessary</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not think the recommendation of solids at 4-6 months applies to all babies.</li> <li>Does not think feeding solids before 4-6 months would harm her baby.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to her health care provider about feeding her baby solids: when, what, how.</li> <li>Talk to her health care provider about the reasons she has heard for feeding babies solid food (e.g., cereal) early.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss AAP recommendation on solids foods, &amp; discuss WHY the recommendation exists.</li> <li>Provide mother with definition of solid foods, including cereal given in a bottle.</li> <li>Provide information on possible harmful effects of introducing solids early on baby's health.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contemplation</b></p> <p><i>Believes it is best to wait til 4-6 mo. to give solids, but feels barriers may keep her from following the recommendation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would like to give solids to her baby after 4 mo., but believes there are barriers:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Believes baby may be big and needs cereal to be full.</li> <li>✓Thinks giving cereal will help her baby sleep through the night.</li> <li>✓Does not want to give her baby a lot of formula (cost, too often to feed, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss baby nutrition with her health care provider.</li> <li>Discuss her barriers with health care provider, and gather information that addresses each barrier.</li> <li>Develop written plan for introducing solid foods to her baby.</li> <li>Discuss her plan with her support system (partner, family, daycare provider).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss energy and nutrient needs of babies with the mother, including the adequacy and frequency of breast or formula feeding.</li> <li>Talk about normal infant behaviors like waking, crying, and ways to handle other than feeding.</li> <li>Provide growth and developmental milestones mothers can use to determine baby's readiness for solids.</li> <li>Brainstorm strategies to deal with barriers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action</b></p> <p><i>Intends to wait until baby is 4-6 mo. to give solid foods</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wants to give her baby solids when her baby is ready, between 4-6 months.</li> <li>Recognizes barriers she may encounter and has a strategy to deal with them.</li> <li>Is discussing her infant feeding plans with her health care provider and with her support system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch for developmental signs that baby is ready for solids foods.</li> <li>Continue to provide a healthy feeding environment (e.g., use of high chair or infant seat, no TV if possible).</li> <li>Let health care provider know if any recommendations are not realistic and why.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce mother's/caregiver's self-confidence and self-esteem in doing her best for her baby.</li> <li>Ask if there are any new problems and if so, brainstorm coping strategies.</li> <li>Suggest alternatives if particular recommendations are not possible in mother's situation.</li> </ul>

\*The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that almost all babies be exclusively breastfed until 6 months of age. AAP also acknowledges that between 4 and 6 months of age, babies will be developmentally ready to begin foods other than breast milk or formula (solid foods).

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