

## **GUIDE FOR INFANT FEEDING: INTRODUCTION OF SOLID FOODS**

One in three children in Michigan is overweight, and Michigan is ranked as one of the top five states in the nation for obesity. Early intervention with infants in delaying the early introduction of solid foods until 4 to 6 months of age, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), is an important first step in developing healthy eating patterns and reducing the later risk of overweight. A goal of “The Infant Feeding Study” or **TIFS**, funded by Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) and Michigan State University, is to provide health care providers and nutrition educators a guide to help pregnant women and infants on Medicaid to delay the early introduction of solid foods and reduce the risk of early childhood overweight.

The Guide for Infant Feeding: Introduction of Solid Foods was developed by using existing data and focus group research conducted with Medicaid mothers throughout Michigan. In the focus group sessions, mothers reported about their beliefs and practices regarding introducing solid foods to their infants. Focus groups were also conducted with health care providers, including pediatricians, nurses, MDCH Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutritionists and social workers, and MSU Extension instructors and staff. The resulting data were used to develop strategies for helping mothers introduce solid foods when infants are developmentally ready.

This guide and the five accompanying handouts are for use with pregnant mothers or mothers/caregivers with new infants. These documents will help mothers and caregivers understand the reasons to delay the early introduction of solid foods, give breast milk or formula to their infant, and follow the recommendation of the AAP. Also provided are posters that may be posted in waiting areas or waiting rooms to prompt mothers to ask providers for information on when to give their infants solid foods.

Please see the next page for instructions regarding how to use the Guide for Infant Feeding.

Instructions for the use of the **Guide to Infant Feeding**:

1. Identify the mother's "Readiness" to consider waiting until the recommended time to feed her infant solid foods. States of "Readiness" are listed in the left hand column. Examples of the mother's state of mind that you may use to assess her readiness are listed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> column, "Mother/Caregiver's State of Mind."
2. Once the mother's stage of "Readiness" is identified, use the suggestions in the third column "Mother/Caregiver's Role to help the mother understand what she can do to help her make infant feeding decisions.
3. Use the 3<sup>rd</sup> column, "Provider's Role" to find suggestions on how you might help the mother wait to give her baby solids until the recommended time.

For example, if the mother is in the "Precontemplation" stage, she does not believe that waiting to give solids until the infant is 4 to 6 months of age is necessary. Her state of mind (2<sup>nd</sup> column) provides her thinking on why waiting is not necessary, such as feeling "it would do no harm." The mother/caregiver's role (third column) gives her direction about what she should talk about with her healthcare provider, with ideas on information for the healthcare provider to give is noted in the last column, "Provider's Role."

Handouts are included with the guide to provide tools that you could use in discussion with the mother. These handouts would be appropriate to discuss with the mother and to give her to take home.

- **Feeding Solid Foods to Your Baby: What Every Parent Should Know**  
A helpful resource on the when and how of introducing solid foods, including the discussion of myths related to solid foods.
- **Feeding Your Baby - Zero to Six Months**  
Introduction to solids, feeding tips, and signs of hunger and satiety in infants.
- **Helping Your Baby Feel Calm**  
Strategies to calm an infant who is fussy but not hungry.
- **Plan for Feeding My Baby**  
Interactive teaching-learning strategies to provide tools for mothers or caregivers to delay solids.

This handout is to give the provider some background for discussion with the mother, but was not written to be provided to parents.

- **Health Concerns for Feeding Solid Foods Too Early**