

## **Baby Food Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats**

### *Staff Activity*

WIC will provide infant cereal and baby food fruits and vegetables to all infants at 6 months of age. In addition, breastfed infants will also receive meats. The foods will be Stage 1 or 2, or 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Foods, depending on the brand. WIC is also encouraging mothers to make their own baby foods, by providing 2 pounds of fresh bananas. These changes are new and exciting for WIC families. So let's talk about them!

1. Why do you think WIC is now offering baby food fruits and vegetables?
2. Why does WIC give fully breastfed infants twice as much baby food fruits and vegetables?
3. Why do only breastfed infants receive baby food meats?
4. What are the benefits of commercial baby foods?
5. What are the disadvantages of commercial baby foods?
6. Should we still encourage moms to make homemade baby foods?
7. What are some special instructions to give moms about purchasing baby foods?
8. Why can't participants purchase higher stages or mixed dinner baby foods?
9. Why are bananas a good choice for participants?
10. Why do you think infant juice is no longer offered?
11. What are the overall advantages of the new infant food packages?

## **Possible Answers**

1. Why do you think WIC is now offering baby food fruits and vegetables?

A: The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend increasing daily intake of fruits and vegetables. Offering baby food fruits and vegetables supports this guidance. Baby food fruits and vegetables help to introduce older infants to new flavors and textures. Commercial baby food is available in developmentally appropriate textures and a wide variety of flavors. The small size containers also aid food safety practices. Additionally, baby food fruits and vegetables limit excessive juice intake and help build a foundation of healthful eating habits for life.

2. Why does WIC give fully breastfed infants twice as much baby food fruits and vegetables?

A: To encourage and promote breastfeeding.

3. Why do only breastfed infants receive baby food meats?

A: Meats are being offered as an incentive to encourage more moms to breastfeed, and to breastfeed for longer. All infants need a source of iron and zinc around 6 months, important nutrients in meat. Infant formula is fortified with these nutrients, but baby food meats should still be encouraged for non-breastfeeding infants.

4. What are the benefits of commercial baby foods?

A: Commercial baby foods are convenient and readily available throughout Colorado. They come in a variety of fruits, vegetables, and meats to encourage different tastes. They provide the same nutrients as homemade baby foods, without added sugar, salt, or preservatives.

5. What are the disadvantages of commercial baby foods?

A: WIC moms will only be able to purchase Stage 1 or 2, or 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> foods. Although these foods are just as nutritious as higher stages, this limits texture and consistency for the older baby's food and food choices. Also, not all stores will carry large varieties, so mom will have to choose from what the store carries.

6. Should we still encourage moms to make homemade baby foods?

A: Yes. As babies develop, they should be introduced to more flavors and textures of foods. Moms can make any plain vegetable, fruit, or meat into a baby food, including food that she is already preparing for herself or her family. She can alter flavors, nutrients, textures and consistencies to best meet baby's needs or desires. Also, homemade baby food is cheaper than commercially prepared baby food. ***Review the pamphlet: Making Your Own Baby Food (WIC #I11)*** as a refresher to help moms make safe foods for their infants.

7. What are some special instructions to give moms about purchasing baby foods?

A: After discussion, refer to the handout "Selecting, Serving, and Storing Commercially Prepared Baby Foods."

8. Why can't participants purchase higher stages or mixed dinner baby foods?

A: *Higher stages* of baby food do not provide any nutritional benefit over Stage 1 or 2 foods, and the texture and consistency are the same for single ingredient fruits and vegetables. This is one of the reasons that WIC will also offer 2 pounds of fresh bananas – so that mom can make her own baby food, and experiment with textures and consistency as baby develops.

Likewise, ounce for ounce, commercially prepared infant food meats, fruits, and vegetables offer more nutrients than *mixed dinners*. Many of the mixed foods and baby desserts have added ingredients, such as sugar, salt, nonfat dry milk, or corn syrup. Instead of using mixed dinners, encourage mom to mix plain baby foods together to make her own dinners.

**Recommended staff activity:** Purchase several stages of baby foods in one or two varieties and encourage staff members to taste and experiment with them. What are the differences? What are the similarities? How can you reassure mom that Stage 1 and 2 are adequate for her baby's nutrition?

9. Why are bananas a good choice for participants?

A: In addition to their high nutrient-density, offering fresh fruit allows for parents to experiment with making baby food, and changing the texture and consistency as baby develops. Bananas are a good choice for infants because they are easy to find, don't need to be cooked or softened, are fairly bland, and most babies like them. For parents, they are an easy baby food to make – peel ripe bananas, and mash or dice to the appropriate consistency for baby's developmental needs.

10. Why do you think infant juice is no longer offered?

A: Fruits and vegetables, as homemade or commercial baby foods, provide more nutrients than juice provides. Juice may also fill up baby, so that he doesn't eat as much/many nutrient-dense foods (breast milk, formula, fruits, vegetables, meats). By encouraging infants to consume more fruits and vegetables and to limit juice, they will be eating nutrient-dense foods that contain vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

11. What are the overall advantages of the new infant food packages?

A: The new packages have been updated to support recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, promote and support breastfeeding, provide appropriate foods at appropriate ages, promote appropriate feeding practices, and provide adequate nutrition to all infants.