



Infant Feeding and the New Food Packages

STAFF HANDOUT

Overview of the Infant Packages

The infant food packages have been updated to support the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations on infant feeding and introduction of solid foods. These changes also:

- promote and support breastfeeding
- include fruits and vegetables and limit juice consumption
- provide complementary foods at appropriate ages
- tie formula amounts to feeding practice and age of infant

At 6 months of age, babies will receive infant cereal and baby food fruits and vegetables. Fully breastfed infants will also receive baby food meats. Infant juice will no longer be provided.

The following pages provide an overview of the packages, signs of readiness for solid foods, new clinic messages, and details on baby food.

Infant Formula and Food Amounts

Age	Fully Formula-Fed	Novel Breastfed	Partially Breastfed	Exclusively Breastfed
<1 mo	9 cans formula	1 to 9 cans formula	---	---
1 – 3 mo	9 cans formula	5 to 9 cans formula	1 to 4 cans formula	---
4 – 5 mo	10 cans formula	6 to 10 cans formula	1 to 5 cans formula	---
6 – 11 mo (see below)	7 cans formula 2-3 (8oz) boxes baby cereal 2 pounds fresh bananas 28 (4oz) jars baby food fruits and vegetables ---	5 to 7 cans formula 2-3 (8oz) boxes baby cereal 2 pounds fresh bananas 28 (4oz) jars baby food fruits and vegetables ---	1 to 4 cans formula 2-3 (8oz) boxes baby cereal 2 pounds fresh bananas 28 (4oz) jars baby food fruits and vegetables ---	--- 2-3 (8oz) boxes baby cereal 2 pounds fresh bananas 60 (4oz) jars baby food fruits and vegetables 31 (2.5oz) jars baby food meat

Ranges are for standard 12.9 ounce cans of powdered formula.

Introducing solid foods: 6 – 11 months

Around 6 months of age, babies go through developmental changes that prepare them to eat solid foods. Babies are ready for solids *when all developmental signs of readiness are present.*

A baby's **developmental signs of readiness** include when baby:

- sits up alone or with support
- holds head steady and straight
- opens his mouth when he sees food coming
- keeps tongue low and flat to receive a spoon
- closes lips over the spoon and scrapes food off as the spoon is removed from the mouth
- keeps food in the mouth and swallows, rather than pushing it back out onto the chin (the baby has outgrown the tongue-thrust reflex)

Overview of the New Infant Feeding Messages



- *Start solid foods around 6 months of age, instead of at 4 – 6 months.*

According to the AAP, breast milk or formula is all a baby needs to support growth and development for the first 6 months of life. Introducing solids before 6 months does not increase calories or growth rate, but does substitute less nutrient-dense foods. Likewise, solids lack the protection that human milk gives breastfed infants.

As well, an infant is born with nutrient stores of iron and zinc proportional to his weight at birth. For most babies, this store lasts around 6 months, at which point they need solid foods to supply these nutrients. Most infants start with iron-fortified infant cereal, and then progress to other solid foods: meats, vegetables, and fruits. Meats are an important source of iron and zinc, and some studies suggest infants start baby food meats first!

- *Encourage moms to wait for all the developmental signs of readiness before starting solids.*

A baby's weight or age alone does not determine readiness for solids. Each baby develops at his own rate! Around 6 months, babies show subtle signs that they are *interested* in trying food: drooling, opening their mouths, and leaning forward. They show lack of interest by leaning back, turning away, pushing food or a spoon away, and closing their mouths.

Babies fed solids before they are developmentally ready run the risk of choking, developing food allergies due to an immature digestive tract, and may consume less than needed amounts of breast milk or formula.

- *Offer age-appropriate amounts of formula (for partially breastfed infants).*

Fully formula-fed babies will receive more formula at 4 months to correspond with the increased nutritional needs of infants this age. Formula amounts vary, but typically a 4 – 6 month old infant will drink about 6 – 8 ounces of formula, 4 – 6 times per day. At 6 – 11 months, formula amounts are reduced. Since the food package provides more nutrients through solid foods, less formula is needed.

- *Discourage the use of infant juice.*

The AAP has concluded that fruit juice offers no nutritional benefit for babies younger than 6 months old, and juice offers no advantage over whole fruits for infants older than 6 months. Too much juice may fill up a baby, and other foods may not be eaten. Instead of giving juice, whole fruits and vegetables prepared for baby are a better alternative.

- *Homemade baby food is important for a baby's changing needs.*

Babies will each get 2 pounds of fresh bananas for homemade baby food. As a baby develops, his needs change from pureed to finger foods. Homemade baby food is important because it allows for variety of nutrients, tastes, textures, and consistencies. Discuss with mom the appropriate consistency and texture for her baby's developmental stage, as well as food safety when making baby food.

Baby foods

Offering fruits and vegetables around 6 months of age exposes baby to a variety of foods. These foods are nutrient-dense, meaning they are high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Most babies also need iron and zinc at this time, and meat is an excellent source of these nutrients.

Purchasing Baby Foods





Fruits and Vegetables:

WIC checks will list a specific number of 4-ounce jars of fruits and vegetables a participant may buy. They may buy smaller sizes that are *up to* 4 ounces, in glass or plastic containers.

Meats:

For fully breastfed babies, WIC checks will list the number of 2.5-ounce jars of baby food meats.

WIC approved baby food may be Stage 1, Stage 2, 1st Foods or 2nd Foods, depending on the brand. These baby foods:

-  are simple ingredient fruits, vegetables, or meats that are free of allergens
-  provide proper nutrition for babies around 6 months of age and older
-  have simple and gentle textures, and are easy for baby to swallow
-  have no added salt or sugar

Participants will be able to buy any non-organic brand of plain fruits or vegetables or any plain combination of fruits or vegetables. For breastfed babies, any plain meat with or without broth or gravy may be purchased. *Participants will not be able to buy :*

- Organic baby food
- Stage 3 or 3rd foods
- Graduates or dinners
- Foods with added DHA or ARA
- Foods with added sugars, starches, or salt
- Fruit or vegetable combinations with meat, rice, or noodles

The simple textures of these lower stages of baby foods are suitable for all infants, even older infants. As infants develop, they will benefit from trying new foods and textures. WIC will still encourage moms to make their own baby foods using bananas and other fresh fruits, vegetables and meats!

Purchasing Bananas

Babies also receive 2 pounds of bananas, listed as one pound of bananas on 2 separate checks.

Participants will be able to purchase *up to* 1 pound, but not over 1 pound of bananas. A pound is equal to about 3 or 4 medium bananas. Participants are encouraged to weigh their bananas to get as much food with their WIC checks as possible!



Review the pamphlet Making Your Own Baby Food (WIC #I11)

Anticipated Participant Questions and How to Respond

Why did the amount of formula change?

Fully formula-fed infants will now receive formula amounts that are more age-appropriate. From birth to 3 months, the amount is the same. From 4 – 5 months, babies receive *more* formula since they have higher energy needs at this time. After 6 months, babies get extra nutrients through baby foods, so less formula is needed.

The amount of baby food we get seems like a lot. Does my baby need this much?

The amount of baby food offered is about 1 jar of food per day [3 jars per day for breastfed infants], but different babies eat different amounts. The amount of food provided offers the flexibility to add variety of tastes and nutrients, and encourages healthy eating. However, if it is more than your baby needs, you may purchase less.

Doesn't my older baby need 3rd Foods/Stage 3 baby foods?

The baby foods for older infants have the same nutrients that Stage 1 or 2 foods have. The only difference is that foods for older babies offer different textures and consistencies. As your baby develops, he will benefit from eating homemade baby food and table foods that are different textures and consistencies.

Why do fully breastfed babies get more baby food than babies who are not fully breastfed?

Fully breastfed babies get extra baby food as an incentive for moms to continue breastfeeding. Also, since fully breastfeeding babies don't receive any formula, the cost that would have been used for formula is used for baby food instead.

Why doesn't my baby receive baby food meats? Doesn't he need iron and zinc, too?

[Meats are provided for fully breastfed babies]. For fully breastfed babies, it's an incentive for moms to keep breastfeeding. Around 6 months of age, all infants need a source of iron. As your baby grows, offering meats will give him different nutrients and help him develop an interest in a variety of foods. Would you like to discuss how to make your own baby foods?

Is commercially prepared baby food better for my baby than homemade baby food?

WIC includes baby foods to ensure that all babies eat enough fruits and vegetables. Homemade baby food is also very good for your baby! We hope that you will still make homemade baby food, to give more nutrients and variety, and to introduce different textures and consistencies into your baby's diet!