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Well Child Care at 4 Months

Revised August 2012

Feeding Issues

Little actual research has been done on the introduction of solid foods to infants' diets, perhaps because it's such a difficult task to control for all the potential variables. There are many sets of recommendations on how to introduce solids to babies, and virtually all of them are based on custom, culture and theories rather than hard science.

Until now, your baby's dietary needs have been met by breast milk and/or formula. Once your baby reaches 4-6 months of age, you can begin adding "solid foods". We strongly believe that delaying introduction of solids until closer to 6 months is in your baby's best interest. In addition, before this age instead of swallowing the food, they push their tongues against the spoon or the food. Most babies stop doing this by 6 months of age.

Research has shown us a few things:

- ✓ Babies do best when introduction of solids is delayed until close to 6 months of age.
- ✓ Foods should never be placed from another person's mouth into a child's mouth, in other words, never pre-chew a child's food, this causes bacteria from your mouth to colonize your baby's mouth.
- ✓ Never give honey or goat's milk to a baby.
- ✓ Except in a few medical circumstances, babies and children shouldn't drink juice or soda, or sports drinks.
- ✓ Liquids other than breast milk, formula or Pedialyte® should not be offered until children are big enough to drink them from a cup, except on the advice of your pediatrician. This includes water.
- ✓ Children who are not introduced to "junk" foods until after three years of age make healthier food choices on their own as teenagers.

And then there are the things we believe:

- ✓ We believe that solid foods should be introduced gradually, not more than one new food every 3 or 4 days, so that, if a reaction develops, we have an easier time figuring out the cause.
- ✓ We believe that it makes sense to start with less sweet, easier to digest foods.
- ✓ We believe that it makes sense to avoid foods more likely to cause allergic reactions later in life, especially if close family members are known to have allergies. [90% of food allergies are due to milk, egg, peanut, tree nut (walnut, cashew, etc.), fish, shellfish, soy, or wheat.]

Feeding your baby solid foods To prevent choking, make sure your baby is sitting up when you introduce solid foods. Always use a spoon to feed your baby solid foods. These early experiences will help your child learn good eating habits throughout life. If your baby cries or turns away when you give him the food, do not force the issue. Go back to nursing or bottle-feeding exclusively for a time before trying again. Remember that starting solid foods is a gradual process and at first your baby will still be getting most of his nutrition from breast milk and/or formula.

Some parents try putting baby cereal in a bottle. This is not a good idea. Feeding your baby this way can cause choking. It may also increase the amount of food your baby eats and can cause your baby to gain too much weight.

How to start: Start with half a spoonful or less and talk to your baby through the process ("Mmm, see how good this is!). Your baby may not know what to do at first. She may look confused, wrinkle her nose, roll the food around her mouth, or reject it altogether. This is a normal early reaction to solid foods.

One way to make eating solids for the first time easier is to give your baby a little breast milk and/or formula first, then switch to very small half-spoonfuls of food, and finish with more breast milk and/or formula. This will prevent your baby from getting frustrated when she is very hungry.

Do not be surprised if most of the first few solid-food feedings wind up on your baby's face, hands, and bib. Increase the amount of food gradually, with just a teaspoonful or two to start. This allows your baby time to learn how to swallow solids. Once started, most babies average 1 to 3 tablespoons of food at each meal.

How do I spoon feed my child? Place food on the middle of the tongue. If you place it in front, your child will probably push it back at you. Some infants get off to a better start if you place the spoon between their lips and let them suck off the food. Some children constantly bat at the spoon or try to hold it while you are trying to feed them. These children need to be distracted with finger foods or given another spoon to hold. By 1 year of age, most children want to try to feed themselves and can do so with finger foods. By 15 to 18 months of age, most children can feed themselves with a spoon and no longer need a parent's help to eat.

What kind of foods should my baby eat? For most babies it does not matter which solid food you choose to start. By tradition, single-grain commercial cereals (brown rice, barley, or oatmeal - not wheat) are usually introduced first because of the importance of the iron that is added.

Although there is no evidence that introducing solid foods in any particular order provides an advantage, here is one way to offer a safe, easily digestible, low-allergy-risk introductory routine:

- **6-7 Months: Cereals and Vegetables** Cereals are usually the first solid food added to your baby's diet. Generally these are introduced to infants at around 6 months of age. Baby cereals are available premixed (in individual containers) or dry (to which you can add breast milk, formula, or water). Premixed baby cereals are convenient, while dry cereals are richer in iron and allow you to control the thickness of the cereal. Whichever type of cereal you use, make sure that it is made for babies because these cereals contain extra nutrients your baby needs at this age. Start with brown rice cereal, which is less likely to cause allergies than other cereals. Barley and oatmeal may be tried 2 or 3 weeks later.
- **8 Months: Non-meat proteins** By 8 months of age your baby should be ready for protein alternatives (such as beans, peas, lentils, cottage cheese, and yogurt).
- **9 Months: Fruit and meat** Introduce fruits at 9 months of age. This results in babies learning to accept a wide variety of flavors and textures before being introduced to sweeter foods.

Are there foods I should not feed my child? Egg whites, wheat, peanut butter, fish, and citrus fruits may be more likely to cause allergies than other solid food; avoid these foods to your baby's diet until 1 year of age, especially if your infant or other family members have other food allergies. Also, avoid giving your child honey during the first year of life. Shellfish, strawberries, eggs and foods containing nuts and peanuts (including peanut butter) should probably wait until children are 1 years old in children without a family history of food allergies and at 3 years old if your family has a strong history of food allergies.

Warning: Do not feed your baby home-prepared beets, turnips, carrots, spinach, or collard greens in the first year of life. In some parts of the country, these vegetables have large amounts of nitrates, chemicals that can cause an unusual type of anemia (low blood count) in young babies. Baby food companies are aware of this problem and screen the produce they buy for nitrates. They also avoid buying these vegetables in parts of the country where nitrates have been found. It is safer to use commercially prepared forms of these foods during the first year of life.

Finger Foods Once your baby can sit up and has developed a "pincer grasp", you can give her finger foods to help her learn to feed herself. To avoid choking, make sure anything you give your child is soft, easy to swallow, and cut into small pieces. Most babies love to feed themselves. Since most babies will not be able to feed themselves with a spoon until after 12 months of age, finger foods keep them actively involved in the feeding process.

Good finger foods include dry cereals (Cheerios, Rice Krispies, etc.), slices of cheese, pieces of scrambled eggs, pieces of avocado, slices of canned fruit (peaches, pears, or pineapple), slices of soft fresh fruits (especially bananas), crackers, cookies, and breads.

At each of your child's daily meals, let your child's own appetite set limits on the amount of solids. Stop the feeding when she shows disinterest in continuing.

If you want to give your baby fresh food, use a food processor, or just mash softer foods with a fork. All fresh foods should be cooked with no added salt or seasoning. Though you can feed your baby raw bananas (mashed), most other fruits and vegetables should be cooked until they are soft. Refrigerate any food that you do not use, and look for any signs of spoilage before giving it to your baby. Fresh foods are not bacteria-free, so they will spoil more quickly than food from a can or jar.

Can my child eat table food? Your child should be eating the same meals you eat by approximately 1 year of age. This assumes that your diet is well balanced and that you carefully soften or dice any foods that would be difficult for your baby to chew. Avoid giving your child foods that contain more salt and preservatives.

What changes can I expect after my baby starts solids? When your child starts eating solid foods, his stools will become more solid and variable in color. Due to the added sugars and fats, they will also have a much stronger odor. Peas and other green vegetables may turn the stool a deep-green color, beets may make it red. (Beets sometimes make urine red as well.) If your baby's meals are not strained, his stools may contain undigested pieces of food, especially hulls of peas or corn, and the skin of tomatoes or other vegetables. All of this is normal. Your child's digestive system is still immature and needs time before it can fully process these new foods. If the stools are extremely loose, watery, or full of mucus, however, it may mean the digestive tract is irritated. In this case, reduce the amount of solids and reintroduce them more slowly. If the stools continue to be loose, watery, or full of mucus, consult us to see if your child has a digestive problem.

Should I give my baby juice? Babies do not need juice as a regular part of their diets. We may suggest adding fruit or vegetable juice in certain situations (for example, offering prune juice for constipation).

Should I give my baby snacks? Once your baby goes to 3 meals a day, or eats at 5-hour intervals, he may need small snacks to tide him over between meals. Most babies begin this pattern between 6 and 9 months of age. The mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack should be nutritious, non-milk food. Fruits, vegetables and dry cereals are recommended. If your child is not

hungry at mealtime, cut back on the snacks or eliminate them.

What foods contain iron? Throughout our lives we need iron in our diet to prevent anemia. Certain foods are good sources of iron. Red meats, fish, and poultry are best. Adequate iron is also found in iron-enriched cereals, beans of all types, egg yolks, peanut butter, raisins, prune juice, sweet potatoes, and spinach.

Does my child need vitamins? If you are breast-feeding, you will need to give your child a vitamin D supplement from birth. Formula fed infants get all the vitamins they need from the formula for the first year of life. After your child is 1 year old, add a daily multivitamin which contains Vitamin D. These are available both in liquid and chewable forms.

Choking hazards: Do not give your baby any food that requires chewing at this age. Do not offer firm foods to children under 4 years old unless they are chopped completely; these foods are common choking dangers. When infants and young children do not grind or chew their food well, they may try to swallow it whole. The following foods can be choking hazards:

Hot dogs (including meat sticks)	Chunks of meat or cheese
Nuts and seeds	Popcorn
Whole grapes	Chunks of peanut butter
Raw vegetables	Fruit chunks, such as apple chunks
Hard, gooey, or sticky candy	Chewing gum

Using a high chair The following are safety tips for using a high chair:

- Make sure the high chair you use cannot be tipped over easily.
- If the chair folds, be sure it is locked every time you set it up.
- Whenever your child sits in the chair, use the safety straps, including the crotch strap. This will prevent your child from slipping down, which could cause serious injury or even death. Never allow your child to stand in the high chair.
- Do not place the high chair near a counter or table. Your child may be able to push hard enough against these surfaces to tip the chair over.
- Never leave a young child alone in a high chair and do not allow older children to climb or play on it because this could also tip it over.
- A high chair that hooks on to a table is not a good substitute for a freestanding one. If you plan to use this type of chair when you eat out or travel, look for one that locks on to the table. Be sure the table is heavy enough to support your child's weight without tipping. Also, check to see whether your child's feet can touch a table support. If your child pushes against the table, it may dislodge the seat.

After 1 year of age, if you have a family history of obesity, cardiovascular disease, or high cholesterol, your child's doctor may suggest using reduced fat milk. After 1 year of age you may also reduce the amount of food your child eats at each meal. However, it is important that he continues to get the balanced diet he needs. Talk with us about this; we will help you determine if your child is eating too much, not eating enough, or eating too much of the wrong kinds of foods.

Because prepared baby foods have no salt added, they are unlikely to result in excess salt intake. However, as your baby eats more "table foods," he will imitate the way you eat, including using salt and nibbling on salty snacks. For your child's sake as well as your own, eat a healthy diet yourself and decrease your intake of fat and salty snack foods. Provide a good role model by eating a variety of healthy, nutrient-rich foods.

Development Babies may be starting to roll over from stomach to back. If your baby isn't rolling yet don't worry, you may want to increase his daily "tummy time". Your baby's voice may become louder. He may squeal when happy or cry when he wants food or to be held. In both cases, gentle soothing voices are the best way to calm your baby. Babies at this age enjoy toys that make noise when shaken. It is also normal for babies to cry. At this age you can't spoil a baby. Meeting your baby's needs quickly is still a good idea.

Sleep Many babies are sleeping through the night by 4 months of age and will also nap 4 to 6 hours during the daytime. If your baby's sleeping patterns are different than this you may want to ask your doctor for ideas about ways to keep your baby alert and awake during the day and sound asleep at night. Remember to place your baby in bed on her back.

Teething Your baby may begin teething. While getting teeth, your baby may drool and chew a lot, however teething does not cause fever, diarrhea or a runny nose. A teething ring is very useful.

Safety Tips

Avoid Suffocation and Choking

- Remove hanging mobiles or toys before the baby can reach them.
- Keep cords, ropes, or strings away from baby, especially near the crib. Ropes and strings around the baby's neck can choke him.
- Keep plastic bags and balloons out of reach.
- Use only unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts that can come loose.

Avoid fires and burns

- Never eat, drink, or carry anything hot near the baby or while you are holding the baby.
- Turn down your water heater to 120°F (50°C).
- Check your smoke detectors to make sure they work.
- Check formula temperature carefully. Formula should be warm or cool to the touch.
- Don't smoke in the house or near the baby.

Car Safety

- Use an approved infant car seat correctly in the back seat.
- Never leave your baby alone in the car.
- Wear your safety belt.

Avoid Falls

- Never leave the baby alone in a high place.
- Keep crib and playpen sides up.
- Do not put your baby in a walker.

Immunizations At the 4-month visit, your baby should have immunizations which protect against (protection for several of these diseases may be combined in a single shot).

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| • Diphtheria | • Tetanus | • Pertussis (Whooping Cough) |
| • Haemophilus Influenzae Type B | • Hepatitis B | • Polio |
| • Pneumococcus | • Rotovirus | |

Your baby may run a fever (defined as 100.5 rectal or higher) and be irritable for about 1 day after the shots. Your baby may also have some soreness, redness, and swelling where the shots were given. Acetaminophen may help to treat fever and irritability. Acetaminophen drops come in a concentration of 80mg per 0.8ml (dosing is based on weight but most 4 month olds should get 0.8 ml, every 4 to 6 hours). Most acetaminophen drops are being replaced by acetaminophen liquid or suspension in a concentration of 160mg per 5ml (dosing is based on weight but most 4 month olds should get 2.5 ml every 4 to 6 hours). For swelling or soreness, put a wet, warm washcloth on the area of the shots as often and as long as needed for comfort.

Baby-Sitting Reminders

Parents Should:

- Meet the sitter and check references and training in advance.
- Be certain the sitter has had first aid training and knows CPR.
- Be sure the baby-sitter is at least 13 years old and mature enough to handle common emergencies.
- Have the sitter spend time with you before baby-sitting to meet the children and learn their routines.
- Show the sitter around the house. Point out fire escape routes and potential problem areas. Instruct the sitter to leave the house right away in case of fire and to call the fire department from a neighbor's house.
- Discuss feeding, bathing, and sleeping arrangements for your children.
- Tell your sitter of any allergies or specific needs your children have.
- Have emergency supplies available including a flashlight, first aid chart, and first aid supplies.
- Tell the sitter where you will be and when you will return.
- Be sure any guns are stored unloaded in locked cabinet.

Sitters Should:

- Be prepared for an emergency.
- Always phone for help if there are any problems or questions.
- Never open the door to strangers.
- Never leave the children alone in the house - even for a minute.
- Never give the children any medicine or food unless instructed to do so by the parents.
- Remember that their job is to care for the children. Tender loving care usually quiets an unhappy child.