

Expanding Tastes and Textures of Food: Infant Feeding Series

Additional Education Visit Around 6 months

Research shows that most babies (90%) will have been introduced to some infant cereal or pureed food by 6 months. This is a perfect time to check in with parents on how the introduction of solid foods is going, and to provide additional guidance if necessary. Some questions that might be helpful in assessing progress with introduction of complementary foods might include:

- What foods have you offered? (assess whether foods are high in iron and zinc)
 - If no solids yet, why? What's the plan? What guidance has the Dr. given?
- How has (baby's name) accepted the food?
- How much/how often are solid foods being offering?
- Have you tried a cup with (baby's name)? Tell me about how that went.
- What questions might you have about your experience so far?
- What questions do you have on what's coming next?

Parents are usually open to, and interested in, learning about what to expect from their baby in the upcoming months. Anticipatory guidance messages should be tailored to parent's knowledge, interest and experience. A number of suggestions are provided below.

What and how much to feed:

- Introduce solid foods gradually.
- If the baby is 7-8 months old, and has been offered 5-7 new foods without any problems, it is **not necessary** to wait several days between each new food.
- Focus on introducing a **variety** of food from all the food groups (vegetables, fruits, grains, meat/protein, dairy products besides milk). *There are no rules about the "order" of foods to be introduced.*
- Continue to offer foods daily that are rich in iron and zinc, such as baby meats and iron fortified infant cereal. In general, about 2 servings per day of cereal (2 T/serving) or 2 oz. of meat per day will meet iron and zinc needs.
- Avoid foods that contain sugar, salt and fat.
- Continue to offer breastmilk and formula until 1 year of age. Breastmilk or formula will initially provide the majority of the calories for your baby, but the solid foods provide important nutrients like iron and zinc.

Transition of texture:

- Offer pureed foods until baby becomes skilled at moving food off the spoon and swallowing, then transition to mashed and lumpier foods. Transition the texture as baby shows readiness. This is important in order to avoid texture aversions later.
- After pureed and mashed foods, start offering lumpy and soft finger foods, always following the lead of baby's readiness. Encourage self-feeding as soon as lumpy foods are offered, then transition to chopped food and small hard finger food.

PUREED → MASHED → LUMPY → CHOPPED → SMALL HARD

Starting a cup:

- Once your baby starts solid foods, offer 4-6 oz. of water in a small (4-6 oz) open cup at meals.
- Choose a small plastic cup. A cup with two handles may be easiest for your baby at first. Use a cup without a lid so your baby learns how to clip lips around the rim of the cup and drink.
- Assist your baby by holding the cup yourself at first, and letting the baby sip from it. At first your baby may not clip his lips on the cup, and liquid will dribble down on each side. This is normal. Your baby will learn quickly how to clip his lips on the cup.
- Sippy cups are not recommended. They keep your baby from learning to clip his lips on the cup which delays the development of muscles that are needed for speech.
- By offering a cup at 6 months, your baby will become skilled at drinking out of a cup before it's time to wean from the bottle or breast.

Food Safety:

- **No honey until age 1.** This includes honey in foods (such as honey graham crackers)
- **Avoid round things** such as hot dogs or whole grapes. These are slippery and the size of your baby's throat.
- **No cow's milk until age 1.** It's ok to have other dairy products such as cheese and yogurt.
- Follow your doctor's advice on WHEN to introduce peanut butter. Never feed peanut butter on a spoon, because baby may choke.

Setting the Education Agenda:

Knowing what to expect and what comes next, builds parents' confidence. Because there are multiple topics that can be covered at this age, and parents come with a variety of knowledge

and life experiences, you might consider utilizing a PCS tool such as a blank circle chart to tailor the education session and set the agenda.

This will help you focus on the one or two topics that are most important to the participant. If something came up in the assessment portion of the appointment -- for example, a cup has not been introduced yet -- it's ok to suggest that topic to the parent and ask permission to discuss it. See the next page for a scenario that incorporates a blank circle chart tool. What other [PCS resources](#) might be useful to you at the 6 month additional education visit?

If you are unfamiliar with using a circle chart, or need a review, here is a link to a [Circle Chart Demonstration](#) at a WIC Visit - *start viewing at 1:18 minutes*. A [Blank Circle Chart Template](#) is found here, or a *sample of a filled circle* chart is provided with this article.

Putting it into Practice:

THE SCENARIO: Carrie and Jacob are at WIC for an additional education visit. Carrie is a first time mom. Baby Jacob is 6 months old, healthy, growing well. You have already checked in with mom, and assessed how Jacob is doing with solid foods. Jacob started on rice cereal at 5 months. He is fed cereal 2x per day. Mom recently offered jarred baby vegetables—carrots and peas, which he ate well. Mom mostly breastfeeds him, but he gets a formula bottle right before bed. He has not been offered a cup at meals. You are now transitioning to the education portion of the visit.

CPA: We have some time today that we can spend talking about what to expect in the next few months as Jacob gets used to eating a variety of foods. How does that sound?

CARRIE: Sure, that sounds good.

CPA: There are so many things we could talk about but I'd like to focus on what you are most interested in. I know from our earlier discussion, you said you hadn't introduced Jacob to a cup yet, so that might be something you are interested in hearing a little bit more about. (*Write "Cup" in blank circle*)

Some other topics that parents with babies Jacob's age have asked about include:

- What and how much to feed their baby (*Write "What and How Much" in circle*)
- How to transition from smooth to lumpier foods (*Write "Texture"*)
- And some moms want to know about food safety and foods that should be avoided (*Write "Food Safety"*)
- Or maybe there is another topic that you are interested in. (*Write "?"*)

Which one or two things interest you most?

CARRIE: I didn't even think about starting a cup with Jacob because he seems too young, so I'd like to know more about that.

And then I guess I'm a little scared about him eating anything but baby food so let's talk about transitioning texture.

After topics have been chosen, the rest of the appointment is easy, because you are focusing on what the participant is interested in hearing. You won't feel like you are giving them information that they already know, or don't care about. Give circle charts a try, you might find them to be a tool that works well for you.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

PCS resources

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/index.html>)

Circle Chart Demonstration (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scCFcR52bMM>)

Blank Circle Chart Template: What we talked about in WIC today

(<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/WIC/Documents/orwl/Blank-Eng-Span-circle-charts-What-we-talked-ab.pdf>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

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