



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

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Feeding Infants

When feeding an infant, breast milk is the best option for a newborn, but it may not be readily available in a child care setting. Mothers should always be welcome to come to a child care center to feed their babies, or they can leave expressed breast milk with the child care providers. Breast milk or formula is suggested to be continued up to 12 months. An infant from 4-6 months or an infant who is developmentally ready and is able to hold up his or her head should begin to be introduced to solid foods. Beginning solid foods too early can be a choking hazard.



Solid foods can also be referred to as complementary foods in the child care setting. Solid foods are actually pureed or soft foods that are easy for a baby to eat. The term complementary food simply refers to infant cereal, vegetables, fruits, and meats and other protein-rich foods with a modified texture which are given to infants based on the infant's developmental readiness. Typically, iron-fortified rice cereal is the first solid food given to an infant because of its low allergy rate. Rice cereal and other cereals or solid foods should not be added to an infant's bottle. It

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Feeding Infants



can become a choking hazard and has also been linked to overfeeding, which can lead to childhood obesity.

Complementary foods should be introduced to an infant's diet one at a time. This will help determine if the infant has an allergy to a food. Wait at least a week between introducing new foods. After foods are known to not cause an allergic reaction, they may be mixed or served with other foods.

Below is a chart of signs of infant developmental readiness and specific infant age ranges:

Sequence of Infant Development and Feeding Skills	
Age	Signs of Infant Development Readiness
1-2 months	Infants should have 6-8 wet diapers in 24 hours.
3-4 months	Infants should have 6-8 wet diapers in 24 hours.
5-6 months	Babies at this age can swallow liquids, but solids are pushed out of the mouth.
4-6 months	Teething begins around this age. When a baby can hold his or her head up, they are ready for solid foods. Other signs include: open mouth when food is offered, keep food in mouth and swallow, and reaching for food. The pincer grasp (thumb and index finger) is used to pick up objects.
7-8 months	Around this age, babies are able to chew and begin to sit up on their own. New flavors and textures can be added. Solid foods should be fed from a spoon.
9-10 months	Babies can chew and bite at this age. Eye and hand coordination improves. More textures can be introduced such as chopped, diced, and small chunks. Finger foods should be soft, well cooked and in small, bite size pieces to avoid choking. Milk and water from a cup should be served at meals and snacks. Avoid foods that could cause choking, such as hot dogs and grapes.
11-12 months	By this age, babies can self-feed. Cups are used more and held by infants at this age. Small whole pieces of soft foods can be offered.

For more information visit: <http://wicworks.nal.usda.gov/infants/infant-feeding-guide>



Vegetable of the Month Asparagus

Asparagus is a long, green spear-like vegetable. This nutritious vegetable is a good source of vitamin C and vitamin A and is also high in folate. Asparagus has a tender texture and succulent flavor. Grown in the peak season from April to May, asparagus usually reaches 6-8 inches in length. Asparagus is grown underground and grows through the soil into tall shoots. They can be stored in the refrigerator for up to four days in a plastic bag with the end of the stalks wrapped in a wet paper towel to retain freshness. When choosing asparagus in the grocery store, one should look for stalks that are dry, firm, and odorless. It can be found fresh, frozen, or canned.

Nutrition Tip

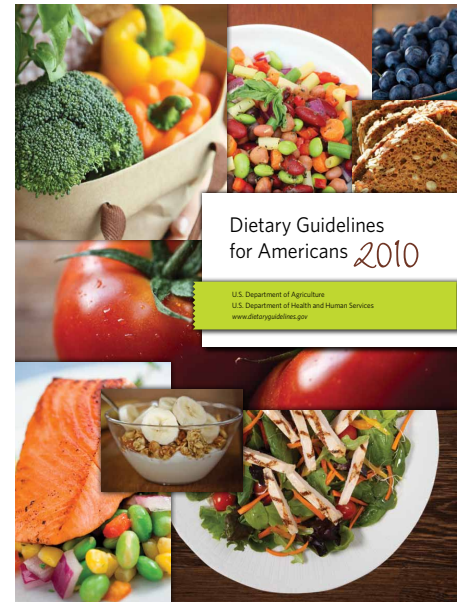
Celebrations are fun and enjoyable occasions for child care settings. They are also an opportunity to provide a healthy eating environment and motivate children to make healthy choices. Many times, celebrations are full of high-sugar and high-calorie drinks and snacks. It is possible with proper planning to create a fun celebration and encourage a healthy environment at the same time. Activities such as dancing, games, and crafts should be included in the celebration to promote overall wellness.

Parties should be held after lunch, so children are hungry for lunch. Food does not have to be the main focus of an event, but it does not have to be completely omitted. The food served should encourage and support healthy eating habits. Offer fruit kabobs, vegetables and dip, yogurt parfaits, and whole grain crackers instead of sugary treats such as cupcakes, candy, and soft drinks or salty snacks. Teaching children that high-sugar and high-calorie foods do not have to be a part of a celebration is important, because eating habits are hard to change as children get older. Children can have fun at parties and learn how to be healthy at the same time!



Nutrition Fact

Did you know that Federal nutrition and education policies are shaped around the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*? Updated every five years, the *Dietary Guidelines* provide reliable information on living a healthy lifestyle. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) jointly produce the *Dietary Guidelines*. The current edition is 2010, meaning the new *Dietary Guidelines* are projected to be released in the year 2015. The recommendations are generally proposed for ages 2 and up, including individuals at risk for diseases. The *Dietary Guidelines* focus on maintaining and promoting health and preventing diseases through choice of food and beverages. All research based, the information in the *Dietary Guidelines* provides key recommendations on balancing calories, increasing and reducing consumption of certain foods, and developing healthy eating habits. The *Dietary Guidelines* are a great reference for an overall healthy lifestyle. For more information go to: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2010/DietaryGuidelines2010.pdf>.



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