

GRAB AND GO LESSON

Infants and Developmental Readiness

Compliance | CACFP Meal Pattern

Purpose: This handout provides American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines for identifying when an infant is developmentally ready to accept solid foods.

Around six months, most infants become developmentally ready for solid foods. During this time, infants begin to need additional food to complement breastmilk. It is significant for infants because when foods are introduced at the right time, it promotes healthy growth and development.

When is an infant developmentally ready?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), introducing solid foods to infants before they are ready increases an infant's risk of weight gain during the early years and being overweight later in life. When infants are not physically ready to accept solid foods, they are also at a higher risk of choking.

Another major challenge of serving foods too early is infants may consume less breastmilk or iron-fortified formula and not get enough essential nutrients for proper growth and development. You should only introduce solid foods to infants around six months when they are developmentally ready to accept them.

There is no single, direct signal to determine when an infant is developmentally ready to accept solid foods.

An infant's readiness depends on their rate of development. The AAP provides the following guidelines to help determine when an infant is developmentally ready.

- The infant can sit in a high chair, feeding chair, or an infant seat with good head control.
- The infant opens their mouth when food comes their way. They may watch others eat, reach for food, and seem eager to be fed.
- The infant can move food from a spoon to their mouth.
- The infant has doubled their birth weight.

As an early childhood professional working in a CACFP setting, maintain constant communication with infants' families about when and what solid foods should be served while the infant is in your care. You may find it useful when talking to families to use the AAP guidelines to help determine if an infant is developmentally ready to begin eating solid foods. You may also wish to request in writing from the family when and what solid foods to begin serving the infant.

References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2019). *CACFP meal pattern requirements training*. University, MS: Author.

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