7. UNSUITABLE FOODS

Honey:
Can have bacteria in it which can cause severe illness (botulism) in infants under 12 months old.

Nuts:
Babies can choke on nuts and similar hard foods. Nut pastes and spreads can be offered from 6 months.

Plant-based milks:
E.g. soy, rice, oat, coconut, and almond milks are not an appropriate source of nutrition for babies under 12 months. Use breastmilk or infant formula.

Low fat and reduced fat milks:
Are not recommended for children under 2 years. After 2 years of age children can drink reduced fat milks (2.5% fat). After 5 years of age children can drink low fat milk (e.g. skim milk).

Caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks:
Do not offer babies coffee or sugar sweetened drinks (e.g. soft drinks, cordials, energy drinks).

8. ALLERGIES

There is no particular order advised for the introduction of solid foods or rate that new foods should be introduced, as long as iron rich foods are introduced first.

If allergies are a problem in your family seek advice from a health professional. The following foods are more commonly associated with allergies in babies: milk, eggs, seafood/fish, nuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy and wheat. There is no need to delay introduction of these foods after 6 months.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information:

Early Childhood Health Centres:
For centre locations throughout NSW, consult your local white/yellow pages or whitepages.com.au under the heading ‘Community Health Centre’ or ‘Early Childhood Health Centre’.

Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA):
Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268 www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Tresillian 24-hour Parents Helpline: (02) 9787 0855 or 1300 272 736 (Freecall outside Sydney metropolitan area) www.tresillian.net/

Karitane Care Line: 1300 227 464 www.karitane.org.au

Mothersafe. Medications in Pregnancy and Lactation Service:
Phone: (02) 9382 6539 or 1800 647 848 (Freecall outside Sydney metropolitan area)

Personal Health Record (known as the ‘Blue Book’):
www.health.nsw.gov.au

Healthy Kids website:
www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

References:
- Infant Feeding Guidelines NHMRC 2012
- Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement WHO 2011
- Australian Dietary Guidelines NHMRC 2013

Developed by Nutrition Services and Central Coast Kids and Families, Central Coast Local Health District, in partnership with the Australian Breastfeeding Association and mothers of the Central Coast. The information in this leaflet is intended as a general guide for parents of healthy full term babies. For more copies of this pamphlet contact the Better Health Centre Ph: (02) 9879 0448, Fax: (02) 9870 0994.
1. **WHY WAIT UNTIL AROUND 6 MONTHS BEFORE INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS?**

Both the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Exclusive Breastfeeding Statement (2011) recommend introducing solid foods at around 6 months. There are no benefits to introducing solid foods before this time.

Introducing solid foods too early can cause problems such as:
- Increased risk of food allergies
- Decreased breastmilk production
- Increased exposure to germs
- Increased load on your baby's kidneys
- Constipation, from poor digestion

If you feel your baby needs to start solids before 6 months of age, contact your local Child and Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner. See 9. *Further information*.

2. **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN FIRST INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS**

As long as iron-rich foods are included, first foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits your baby. See “Around 6 months” for information about iron-rich foods.

Breast or bottle-feed your baby first. Breastmilk or formula is still the most important part of your baby's diet.

At first, solid foods are extras and new tastes for your baby.

Many babies will only eat a tiny amount to start with (less than 1/2 teaspoon). Others may want more.

Mothers often find that a good time of day to start is when baby is not too tired or too hungry.

3. **SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE**

**Eating safely**
As babies are more likely to choke on food than an adult, it is important:
- To watch them while they are eating
- Not to let them move around while they are eating
- To use a safety harness when your baby is in a high chair or low chair
- Not to let them move around while they are eating
- To watch them while they are eating

**Home prepared food** can be just as convenient.

- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, not on the bench (at room temperature). Defrost in the microwave if you are going to use the food straight away.
- Check the temperature of the food by tasting it with a clean spoon. Use another clean spoon to feed your baby. Don’t put your baby's food in your mouth then give it to your baby.
- Once food has been warmed and offered to your baby, throw out any left in the bowl.
- It is important to realise that ‘off’ food can look, smell and taste OK. So, “if in doubt, throw it out”.

**Sleep**
It is common for children to wake once or twice a night into their second year. There is no evidence to support the idea that introducing solids early will help your baby sleep longer at night.

**Weight**
Some people may think that small babies need to start solids early to help them gain weight more quickly. Others may think that large babies need to start solids early in order to keep growing well. Breastmilk provides all the nutrients a healthy baby needs for around the first 6 months of life whatever their size.

**How much food?**
Babies are individuals. Some babies eat enthusiastically and others will take longer to want more than just a taste. If you continue to offer a variety of healthy foods, your baby will take the “appetite”. Remember, milk is still a very important food for babies for at least the first 12 months.

**Fussy eaters**
Almost all babies will learn to accept family foods if they are offered in a positive, friendly way. If you have any concerns, check with your local Child and Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner.

4. **FINGER FOODS**

Babies will begin to actively explore their world and therefore this is a great time to take advantage of their natural interest in food.

- To help your baby learn to eat family foods, it is important he or she practice. Offer an increasing variety of foods, presented in different sizes and textures. Discovering, handling and chewing food assists the development of social skills and promotes the pleasure of eating.

- Babies enjoy foods that they can pick up with their hands and eat by themselves. Wash your baby's hands with warm soapy water first.

**Suggestions**
1. Boiled or steamed vegetables – potato, pumpkin, carrot circles, zucchini strips, beans, peas or slices of beetroot.
2. Raw foods – whole small banana, tomato slices, a small ripe pear, a small whole orange, peeled.
3. Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing and feeding your baby. Don’t put your baby’s food in your mouth then give it to your baby.
4. Grilled or steamed fish – cut into small portions.
5. Cooked lean meat may be cut into strips for chewing and feeding your baby.
6. Home prepared food can be just as convenient.
7. Individual food can be cooked, mashed and then frozen in ice cube trays.

Many food products marketed for babies (e.g. baby custards/yoghurts/pureed fruit) offer no nutritional advantage over regular products.

- They are more expensive than home cooked foods.
- They may look, taste and smell different from family foods and so don’t help babies learn about the foods that the rest of the family eats.
- When they are used often, babies may become so used to them that they are reluctant to change to family foods.
- Regular sucking of food can cause teeth to decay and affect speech development.

**For more information about giving finger foods, talk to a Child and Family Health Nurse.**

5. **COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS**

These can be useful, but:
- They are more expensive than home cooked foods.
- They may look, taste and smell different from family foods and so don’t help babies learn about the foods that the rest of the family eats.
- When they are used often, babies may become so used to them that they are reluctant to change to family foods.
- Regular sucking of food can cause teeth to decay and affect speech development.

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**Home prepared food** can be just as convenient.

- Individual food can be cooked, mashed and then frozen in ice cube trays.

Many food products marketed for babies (e.g. baby custards/yoghurts/pureed fruit) offer no nutritional advantage over regular products.

**6. WHAT ELSE?**

- Keep your baby’s food clean and free from solids:
- Do not add salt, sugar or other seasonings added to their food.
- Some babies may not like the taste of new foods.
- They may need to be offered foods many times before they learn to like them.

**Avoid nutrient poor foods with high levels of saturated fat, sugar, or salt (e.g. cakes, biscuits, confectionery and potato chips).**

- They have very sensitive taste buds at this stage and don’t need salt, sugar or other seasonings added to their food.
- Some babies may not like the taste of new foods.
- They may need to be offered foods many times before they learn to like them.

**For more information about giving finger foods, talk to a Child and Family Health Nurse.**