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## **DIETARY SUGGESTIONS**

1. At 4-6 months, most babies are ready to start solid foods.
2. The first solid food introduced to your baby should be rice cereal. It is usually very well tolerated and provides a good source of iron. After the baby tolerates cereal, vegetables should be introduced. This is the first food that the baby will eat that is not sweet. After vegetables come fruits then meats.
3. Begin with one meal a day. Gradually expand to 2 and then 3 meals. There is no rush. Use your best judgment to decide what types of foods to offer at each meal to give a balanced diet. Offer when the child is hungry and prior to the bottle or breast.
4. Initial introduction of foods does not substitute a milk feeding. As feeding progresses, formula or breast milk intake may decrease as solids increase. It is reasonable to limit milk to 32 ounces as food intake is established.
5. Introduce one new food with a period of 3 – 4 days before the next new food. This allows the parent to determine if each food is tolerated well. Combination foods may be given when it is known that the child can tolerate each food individually.
6. Foods to avoid until greater than 6 months of age: citrus fruits (oranges, lemon, lime, grapefruit), wheat (mixed cereals), and egg whites. These foods can cause food allergies in some children. If there are food allergies in the family or if your child has already suspected of having allergies, delay these foods until 12 months of age.
7. Eggs should be given in moderation (no more than 2 - 3 per week) due to their high cholesterol content.
8. Table foods may be used instead of baby jar foods if desired. Avoid salted foods since they may lead to high blood pressure. If you are giving canned vegetables, choose cans with low sodium (salt). The calorie content of table foods have higher calories than the jar foods. Therefore, babies may eat lesser amounts of table foods compared to jar foods. Puree the foods to make them suitable for the infant.
9. Avoid sweet desserts (cake, cookies, puddings, or candy). By delaying introduction of sweets, the child will likely have a better tolerance for other foods such as vegetables.

10. Many children take time to adjust to new foods, while others readily accept all new foods. No one food is critical to give. Therefore, do not be frustrated if your baby does not take a particular food.
11. Mealtime should always be a pleasant occasion. Your child knows best how much to eat. Feed until the child is content and not eager to have more. Never feed to “empty the jar/bottle” or to “clean the plate.” These attempts lead to arguments, aggravation, and feeding problems. Conflict with feeding can lead to underweight or overweight babies.
12. By 6 months of age, it is reasonable to give 6 tablespoons of iron fortified cereal daily. If your baby is breast fed and is not taking this amount of cereal, then use Trivisol with iron to ensure adequate iron intake. Iron supplementation through formula, cereal, or vitamins should be continued until 12 months of age.
13. Avoid giving a bottle to the child in the crib. Similarly, do not permit the child to hold the bottle for prolonged periods. Sugars from the formula or juice can cause dental cavities. Juices are a common cause of dental cavities, loose stools, and slow growth. Juices are not a necessary part of a child’s nutrition and should only be introduced when the child is able to drink from a cup. The maximum amount of juice for a child in one day is 6 ounces.
14. Avoid foods such as seeds, nuts, and raw carrots until the child is at least 3 years of age. These foods are choking hazards.
15. Insist that all eating be done while sitting at the table, never while not while running or playing. This will prevent choking as well as set up good eating habits.