

# Feeding Your Baby 3-6 months

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**Who:** WIC parents and caregivers of infants 3-6 months of age

**Why:** Feeding practices during infancy influence food habits and health later in life. It is important to discuss the recommended feeding guidelines with parents and caregivers to promote proper growth, development and optimal health.

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

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**Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- list one hunger and one fullness cue
- Identify how much breast milk or formula their infant needs between 3-6 months of age
- Identify developmental signs their infant is ready for solids
- Identify appropriate first foods

## Lesson

**Overview:**

1. Introduction
2. Concept: Feeding Cues for Hunger and Fullness
3. Concept: Signs Your Infant is Ready for Solids
4. Concept: First Foods
5. Closing

**Materials:** Provided by WIC State:

- Handout: Eat Grow Live Healthy: Birth to 6 months
- Handout: Starting Your Baby on Solids
- National WIC Association Magazine: Let's eat!

Provided by Local Agency:

- Whiteboard or flip chart
- Dry erase markers

## Introduction

- Greet the group
- Introduce yourself and your role
- Set the agenda
  - Give an overview of class session and length of class time
- Introductions and icebreaker discussion to anchor participants in the topic
  - Include children in the introductions activity
  - If class time is limited, the facilitator can assess participant's needs and tailor the class by selecting relevant concepts to cover
  - For example:

"Hello everybody! My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am a WIC CPA and would like to welcome to the 'Feeding Your Baby' class. Today's class will focus on 3 - 6 month babies and we will discuss how much breastmilk or formula your infant needs, signs your baby is hungry and full, how to tell your baby is ready for solids as well as some tips for first foods. This class is about 20 to 30 minutes long. We will use this time to learn about feeding your baby and share ideas. Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Let us know your name, your baby's name and one question you have about starting baby foods or giving new foods to your baby."

### Concept: Feeding Cues for Hunger and Fullness

- "From your own personal experience, how do you know when your baby is hungry?"
  - **OPTIONAL:** Write down participants responses on a whiteboard or flipchart. Create a table with two columns. Label one side "Hunger Cues"
- "Great, thank you for sharing! These are all great examples of hunger cues. Let's take a minute to review some other hunger cues."

Offer *Eat Grow Live Healthy: Birth to 6 months*

- Instruct participants to turn to page 3 and ask for a volunteer to read the 'When I am Hungry, Feed Me' paragraph
  - If there are no volunteers, the facilitator can read the information.
- List additional cues under the "Hunger Cues" column.
- "Let's discuss fullness cues. From your personal experience, how do you know when your baby is hungry?"
  - **OPTIONAL:** Write down participants responses on whiteboard or flipchart. Label the 2nd column on the table "Fullness Cues".

"Great responses! Let's read the 'Let Me Eat Until I am Full' information and see if we missed anything. Who would like to read the fullness cues?"

- Review and list additional fullness cues, as needed.
  - ✓ Lets go of the nipple or bottle
  - ✓ Pushes or turns head away
  - ✓ Closes mouth tight
  - ✓ Slows down sucking
  - ✓ Becomes distracted or pays attention to surroundings
  - ✓ Falling asleep

### FACTS ABOUT BREASTMILK OR FORMULA NEEDS

Sometimes parents or caretakers worry breastmilk or formula is not enough for their infant. Reassure parents there is no need to worry – infants under the age of 6 months get everything they need from breastmilk or formula.

Consider writing on the whiteboard or flipchart recommended feeding frequencies:

- **Birth to 4 months** – Infants may eat every 2 to 3 hours = 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. Infant tummies can hold about 2 to 3 ounces at a time.
- **4 to 6 months** – Infants may eat every 3 to 4 hours = 6 to 8 times in 24 hours. Infant tummies can hold 4 to 6 ounces at a time.
- Infants may want to eat more during growth spurts. Growth spurts happen around 10 days, 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months and 6 months.
- **Reminder!** Encourage parents and caregivers to first respond to their infant's hunger and fullness cues instead of following a certain feeding schedule. Reassure them they can know their infant is eating enough if they have 6 or more wet diapers a day and the doctor says they are gaining weight and growing well.

### **Concept: Signs Your Infant is Ready for Solids**

- "Parents and caregivers hear a lot of different things when it comes to starting solids. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends solids be given to babies around 6 months. Pediatricians may also say watching your baby is an important way to tell if he is ready to start solids. So, let's take some time to talk about when it is safe to start feeding your baby solids. "

- Offer NWA's magazine *Let's Eat* to each participant.
- Instruct participants to turn to page 2, 'When is My Baby Ready for Solid Foods?'

"Signs your baby is ready for solids are listed here. Let's take turns reading each one. I'll start. 'Your baby is ready to try solid foods when he can do **all** of these things and is **around 6 months old**: He can sit up with some help.'"

- Going around the room, ask participants to each read one sign of readiness until each has been read. Be sure to let participants know they can take a pass.
  - When is My Baby Ready for Solid Foods?
    - ✓ He can sit up with some help.
    - ✓ He can hold his head steady.
    - ✓ He puts his fingers or toys in his mouth.
    - ✓ He opens his mouth to show he wants food.
    - ✓ When you try feeding him baby food, he can close his lips around the spoon and swallow.

- “Thanks for your help reviewing signs your baby is ready for solids. If your baby cannot do ALL of these things, it is best to wait. Now take a minute to think about which signs, if any, your baby has already been doing. Then, next to each checkmark in your magazine, write ‘yes’ if your baby has been doing that or ‘no’ if not.”
  - Allow a few moments.
  - When completed, ask participants to find a partner and share their baby’s name, age and what signs their baby is showing he is ready for solids.

“Who wants to share with the group some of the signs their baby is showing you she is ready for solids?”

- Allow time for sharing.
- “Great, thank you all for sharing. Did anything surprise you about what you learned today about starting solid foods? What questions do you have?”
  - **Note:** When discussing introducing solids, you may hear a lot of misinformation. Assure feedback is given in a manner that does not belittle the participant. For example, a participant states with her first baby she started cereal at 3 months and that seemed to work well. Try responding to misinformation by:
    - **Asking the group:** “That is an interesting thought. What do others think?”
    - **Affirm, add, and move on:** “I have heard other parents express that opinion. We just covered additional information on the subject, including .... [Reiterate signs of readiness].”
    - **Normalize the misinformation so not to embarrass the participant:** “We’ve heard that from other moms.” or “A lot of parents feel that way.”
    - **Explore pros and cons:** “Based on the information we just covered, what might some of the drawbacks be? What benefits would there be?”
    - You may also find it is appropriate to acknowledge that each parent/caretaker is the expert of their child and offer an encouraging statement, “I know you will make the right choice for you and your baby.”

### Concept: First Foods

- “Once your baby can show you all of the signs we just discussed, she is ready to try solids. When starting solids, parents and caretakers often have questions about how to best feed their infants solids. ”
  - Invite participants to turn to page 4 of the *Let’s Eat* magazine

“Listed here are some common questions and answers about starting solid foods. Reviewing these Q&A’s will give you confidence when starting your baby on solid foods. For this learning activity I will need two volunteers to read each sentence and I will write the answers down on the flipchart.”

- Pause and allow time for participants to volunteer.

"Great, thanks for your help. We are going to start with the second question 'How do I feed my baby?'"

- At the top of the flip chart write "How do I feed my baby?"
- Let each volunteer read the answer, sentence by sentence, and write down each answer:
  - ✓ Sit your baby in a highchair or your lap.
  - ✓ Put a little food (1-2 teaspoons or less) on a baby spoon.
  - ✓ Gently put the spoon in her mouth.
  - ✓ It is ok if the food comes back out, she needs to practice eating from a spoon.
  - ✓ Wait until she is done with each bite before you feed her more.
  - ✓ Do not force her to eat if she cries or turns away. Try again in a week.

"Does anything surprise you about what we just covered? Are there any questions about how to start feeding your baby?"

- Pause, allow a few minutes for questions.
- "Ok, let's review the first question in the *Let's Eat* magazine. The question is 'What do I feed my baby?' and I will again need my two volunteers to read the answer to me."
  - At the top of the flip chart write "What do I feed my baby?"
  - Let each volunteer read the answer sentence by sentence and write down each answer:
    - ✓ Food high in iron (protein and zinc), for example baby cereal or well-pureed, smooth meat.
    - ✓ Follow instructions on cereal box to prepare the cereal. You can mix breastmilk or formula.
    - ✓ Use a blender or grinder to puree cooked meat or pureed or strained baby meat from a jar.

"Great, thank you! Let's review a few tips for starting to feed your infant solids, and you can follow along with the *Starting Your Baby on Solids* handout"

- Offer *Starting Your Baby on Solids* handout
- Point to the 6 months section as you review each point
  - ✓ Keep first foods smooth and thin
  - ✓ Start with 1 – 2 teaspoons or less
  - ✓ Start each feeding with breastmilk or formula
  - ✓ Wait 3 – 5 days before starting each new food.
    - Why? Because you want to watch for any reaction your baby might have to the new food. If you notice any reaction, such as a rash, gas, diarrhea, vomiting or trouble breathing, stop feeding that food and call your doctor. If there is no reaction, continue feeding your baby that food and introduce another food.
  - ✓ Never put cereal or infant foods in a bottle.
    - Putting cereal in the bottle before your infant is developmentally ready can increase the chances of gagging and inhaling the thickened mixture into their lungs. Exposure before 4 months could put your baby at risk for developing foods allergies. Also, cereal in the bottle can lead to overfeeding your infant.

"Both the *Let's Eat* magazine and the *Starting Your Baby on Solids* handout provide examples of new foods to try. Go ahead and look over both materials and then turn to your neighbor to discuss what will be the first food you feed your baby. Or, if your baby has already begun solids, what will be the next food you feed them."

- Point to the bottom of page 5 in the *Let's Eat* magazine and the 6 months section of the *Starting Your Baby on Solids* handout
  - Allow a few moments for participants to review each material and discuss. If class is small, simply ask each participant to share which food they will introduce first
  - Ask each participant to share with the group which food they will feed their baby first or next.
    - Always offer participants the option to pass on sharing
  - **OPTIONAL:** Write responses down on white board or flipchart. This can serve as a goal setting activity.
- "I have one more important thing to share with you today. We have talked about how to start feeding your baby solids and what to start feeding them. But it is also important to discuss what NOT to feed your baby. On page 5 of the *Let's Eat* magazine, I would like to point out the table to the top right of the page 'What NOT to Feed Your Baby'. Go ahead and turn to the person next to you and take turns telling each other what food to avoid feeding their baby and why. For example, 'It's important to avoid giving your baby cow's milk because their tummies can't yet digest it.'
    - If class is small, facilitator can review each food and why it is important to avoid.

"Did anything surprise you about what foods to avoid? Can anyone think of a food to avoid the list did not mention?"

- Pause, allow time for participants to answer.
- **Answer:** Juice. The AAP does not recommend juice for children under 1 year.

Many parents want to know if new food should be introduced in a specific order. The AAP states there is no advantage to introducing solid foods in a particular order and that introducing fruits before vegetables will not lead to a dislike of vegetables. First foods should simply be good sources of protein, iron and zinc. For example fortified infant cereal, pureed meats, beans and legumes. Here are some more tips for offering first foods...

#### **TIPS FOR OFFERING BABY FOOD**

- Start solids when baby is in a good mood.
- Place baby food from a jar into a bowl and feed your baby from the bowl.
  - Germs from his mouth transferred from the spoon can spoil the food.
- Store opened jar or container in the refrigerator for no more than 2 days.
- Keep foods plain because your baby does not need added salt, sugar, butter or other flavors.
- Use a spoon and let him baby hold it from time to time. This will help him learn to eat from a spoon.
- Babies might need to try new foods 10 – 20 times before they like it.

## Closing

- **Summarize:**  
"We've covered a lot of material today about feeding your 3 - 6 month old baby. We talked about how much breastmilk or formula babies need, hunger and fullness cues, signs your baby is ready to start solids. We also talk about babies first foods. Does anybody have any questions?"
- Have participants write down a goal or something that they would like to work on that they learned from the class.
  - **OPTIONAL:** If completed, can also use the goal from goal setting activity in the First Foods concept.
- Thank participants for their participation
  - **Example:** "It was really great having you all here today. You all had some great suggestions and ideas. I look forward to seeing you at our next class."