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Note to the Reader on Using This Handbook

This handbook is for staff that provide nutrition education and counseling to the parents and guardians (termed "caregivers" in the text) of at-risk infants who participate in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). This publication provides an overview of basic subjects related to infant nutrition and feeding and answers some common questions on the nutritional needs of infants; the development of feeding skills; breastfeeding; formula feeding; the introduction of complementary foods; infant feeding practices; food selection, preparation, sanitation, and storage; oral health; vegetarian nutrition; common gastrointestinal problems; obesity; and physical activity/motor skill development.

Since this publication primarily focuses on nutrition for the healthy full-term infant, the reader is advised to consult with other trained health professionals or textbooks on pediatrics and/or pediatric nutrition for more detailed or advanced technical information on particular aspects of infant nutrition; assessment of an infant's nutritional status (including growth and development); and nutrition care for preterm, low-birth-weight or special needs infants, or those with medical conditions. Note that the term "health care provider" in the text refers to the physician, dentist, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, or other health professional providing medical or dental care to the infant.

This handbook can assist staff in disseminating appropriate and accurate information to participants. It is a resource for planning individual counseling sessions, group classes, and staff in-service training sessions. Chapter 8 summarizes key points taken from the whole text. Reference citations throughout the text are cited in full at the end of each chapter. A list of resources is provided in the appendix for additional references on infant nutrition, food safety, and other related topics. For quick reference to topics, refer to the detailed index at the end of this handbook.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this handbook. The recommendations in this handbook are not designed to serve as an exclusive nutrition care plan or program for all infants. It is the responsibility of each staff person providing nutrition education to caregivers of infants to evaluate the appropriateness of nutrition recommendations in the context of an infant's nutritional and health status, lifestyle and other factors affecting that status, and any new developments in infant nutrition. If you have a question or are unsure about the appropriateness of a particular nutrition recommendation for a particular infant, consult with the infant's health care provider and/or a professional with additional expertise in pediatric nutrition before making the recommendation.

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