

## WIC Staff Resource

# Older Infants: Transitioning From Infant Foods to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

The introduction of fresh fruits and vegetables to an infant's diet is an important step as they progress from infant to toddler and develop self-feeding skills. Appropriate education can assist parents and caregivers as their infants transition from jarred or home-prepared infant fruits and vegetables to the fresh forms of these foods.

To assist with nutrition education on this transition, please include the following points. For additional information on the topics below, see the *Infant Nutrition and Feeding Guide: A Guide for Use in the WIC and CSF Programs* at: <http://wicworks.nal.usda.gov/infants/infant-feeding-guide>.



### Infant Development and Feeding Skills

- Infants develop the skills and abilities necessary to self-feed and consume different textures of food at their own rates. However, in general, around 8-11 months of age infants begin to eat ground or finely chopped food and small pieces of soft food; they also begin to experiment with a spoon but prefer to feed themselves with their hands.
- An infant's developmental readiness determines the type and texture of foods to feed and which feeding styles to use. Although size and chronological age correspond with developmental readiness, there are other factors to consider when deciding what and how to feed infants. Hand and body skill development is an important factor in determining an infant's ability to eat foods of different textures as he or she grows older.
- Parents/caregivers need to be aware of their infant's developmental capabilities and nutritional needs when deciding the type, amount, size, and texture (including slipperiness) of food to feed their child as well as the method of feeding (e.g., using a spoon for feeding; allow self-feeding with fingers).
- Infants may be developmentally delayed in their feeding skills due to a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to prematurity, low birth weight, and medical conditions. A caregiver of a developmentally delayed infant will need instructions on feeding techniques from the infant's health care provider or a trained professional in feeding developmentally disabled children.
- Due to the risk of choking, it is best to avoid feeding infants certain foods, including, but not limited to, hard pieces of raw fruit, any raw vegetable, and whole, uncut cherry or grape tomatoes, grapes, berries, cherries, or melon balls.



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### Safe Food Preparation and Storage

(For additional information on produce food safety, visit:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm114299>)\*

\*Note: Although this site also covers fresh-squeezed fruit and vegetable juices, juice is not recommended for infants under 1 year of age.



- Always wash hands well with soap and hot water before preparing food and after touching raw or partially cooked meat, poultry, or fish to avoid contaminating other foods and cooking surfaces.
- Before preparing food, wash all working surfaces used to prepare food, such as countertops or tables, with soap and hot water and then rinse well with hot water.
- Wash an infant's hands and face frequently and especially before he or she eats. An infant's hands can pick up germs, lead paint dust, etc., which could be harmful.
- Select high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables and wash all produce thoroughly under clean, running water before eating, cutting or cooking. Remove pits, seeds, and inedible peels and other parts. Edible skins and peels can be removed either before or after cooking.
- It is not necessary to add salt, sugar, syrups, oil, butter, margarine, lard, or cream to fruits and vegetables prepared for an infant. **Honey should never be added to an infant's foods because of the risk of infant botulism.**
- Separate cutting boards should be used for animal foods (i.e., meat, poultry, fish) and non-animal foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables).
- If freshly cooked food is not served to the infant, immediately refrigerate or freeze it. Discard the foods if left unrefrigerated for 2 hours, including serving time. Remember the concept "If in doubt, throw it out."
- Use freshly prepared refrigerated food within 48 hours.

