



Gerber®

START HEALTHY FEEDING GUIDELINES FOR INFANTS & TODDLERS

Gerber Products Company, in collaboration with the American Dietetic Association (ADA) developed an expert panel to create the Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers in response to the lack of national dietary guidelines for children under two. The Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines provide parents and caregivers with practical, actionable, science-based guidance for feeding infants and toddlers. The Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines encourage healthy eating habits, which, in turn, may help prevent childhood obesity and other related diseases. A need for this guidance was underscored in a recent national survey conducted of 800 moms with children under two, where 50% of those moms surveyed commented that they did not know the daily nutrient requirements for their baby and nine out of 10 surveyed moms (89%) said they would find that information helpful. That survey conducted by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates for Gerber, demonstrated some of the common feeding misconceptions held by moms while the Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines provide solutions for these problems and much more. Key findings from the survey and practical feeding solutions from the Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines are listed below.

PROBLEM

Iron, a critical nutrient, may need to be stressed in the diets of infants and toddlers. Pureed meat and iron-fortified infant cereals are good sources of iron, yet only 1% of moms surveyed with children under 2 actually served pureed meat as a first food.

Moms may be unnecessarily limiting variety in their child's diet. When trying to introduce baby to a new food, more than three-quarters (77% of surveyed moms) of moms surveyed give up after 6 or fewer times and 55% give up after 3 or fewer times.

72% of moms surveyed believe that pureed vegetables should be baby's first food.

Nearly half of moms surveyed don't know the appropriate nutrient requirements for their baby. In fact, the Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines found some vitamins and nutrients may be very hard to get in infants' and toddlers' diets, including essential fatty acids, vitamin D and iron.

Nearly 1/3 of moms surveyed reward good behavior with food and only 9% used praise or a hug as a reward.

SOLUTION

Baby's first foods should meet their nutrient needs – iron-fortified infant cereals or pureed meats can provide much-needed iron source and be served as a first food. Then, moms can introduce fruits and vegetables in any order.

The Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines found it can take up to 10-15 exposures before a baby accepts a new food. It is important that children under 2 establish healthy eating behaviors from the start because it can influence their eating habits later in life. Expanding a baby's world to new food experiences may also increase the likelihood of children trying new foods later in life.

It does not matter the order in which fruits and vegetables are introduced, and instead parents need to encourage variety.

Emphasize a variety of high nutrient foods such as: iron fortified cereal, meats, fruit and vegetables, breast milk/formula for infants and whole milk cow's milk for toddlers. Avoid empty calorie foods and use soybean, canola and safflower oils when preparing toddler foods to provide dietary sources of essential fatty acids.

Responsive parenting is core to developing a healthy infant-parent feeding relationship. Moms should avoid using food as a reward for good behavior and use praise or hugs as an alternative. Additionally, parents should encourage healthy activity and television viewing should be discouraged for children less than 2 years of age.

To view a developmental chart on feeding skills during the first 2 years of life and appropriate foods and textures by stage, visit www.gerber.com