With 24 research technology centers worldwide, Nestlé has the largest food research and development network of any food company. The Nestlé Research Center, based near Lausanne, Switzerland, is the world’s largest private facility for nutrition-related research. Fremont, Michigan is home to the NDC Fremont (Nestlé Development Center) and is the global center of excellence for all Nestlé baby food, meals, and drinks.

Nestlé’s Worldwide Research & Development network provides three fundamental areas of benefits for parents: safety and quality; nutrition and health; and taste, texture, and convenience.

How Research Benefits Your Children

Nestlé and Gerber have helped achieve many nutrition breakthroughs. In 2007, Nestlé introduced the first infant formula in the United States with probiotics—beneficial \textit{B. Lactis} cultures similar to the type found in breastmilk—designed to help support baby’s healthy immune system and digestive health. We also reformulated our meals & snacks for toddlers by reducing trans fats, reducing the sodium content, and using healthier fat sources.
Doctors and Taste Testers

For many years we've worked closely with pediatricians, pediatric psychologists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists to develop comprehensive knowledge of what’s developmentally appropriate for young children to eat.

In 2003, along with our scientific and medical team, we established the Gerber® Milestone Symbols™ system – our developmental feeding model. We use our developmental milestones to ensure that our foods provide developmentally appropriate nutrition, texture, size and shape, and variety at each stage of your baby's development. As we learn more, we continue to offer new foods, tastes and textures!

Does baby like it? We use tiny taste testers from our panel of 2,000 babies to let us know. Because no matter how nutritious our baby food is, it needs to taste good! Carefully watching our little taste-testers also helps us to understand how we can improve our products to be appropriate for young children’s stages of eating development.

Research is a key part of our heritage and an essential element for our future. We know there's still lots to discover about the role of food in our lives, and we continue to search for answers that deliver Nestlé’s promise of Good Food, Good Life™.
Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study (FITS)

Nestlé and Gerber are committed to improving infant and child nutrition through innovation backed by solid research. One of the most notable research efforts is the Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study (FITS), an ongoing initiative for the past 17 years to better understand young children's diets and related behaviors. Nearly 10,000 parents and caregivers have been surveyed across three studies in the U.S., with more than 50 peer-reviewed publications to date.

FITS 2002 was the first undertaking of its size and revealed interesting facts about what infants and toddlers were really eating. Several key issues were brought to light — notably that many toddlers failed to get adequate amounts of several important nutrients, including vitamin E, calcium, potassium, and dietary fiber. In addition, it revealed that many infants and toddlers weren’t eating a discrete portion of fruit or vegetable serving on a given day.

Follow-up FITS research was conducted in 2008 of 3,378 children, expanding the age range for infants and toddlers from birth to 48 months to also include preschoolers. Compared with 2002, the 2008 study showed that infants are being breastfed longer, and fewer children are consuming sweets and sweetened beverages. However, there’s still room for improvement in the diets of many infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Many of their diets contain too much saturated fat and sodium, and they need more fruit, vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats.

FITS 2016 provides the newest data on what young children are eating. Now one in five infants’ diets fall short on iron, a key nutrient for brain development. Some further strides have been made for breastfeeding and fewer are drinking fruit juice. However, a significant percentage of children are still falling short on vegetables, whole grains, and a number of key nutrients like fiber, potassium and vitamin D.

Stay tuned because many exciting things are on the horizon for the FITS as we aim to better understand the nutritional needs of young children. Did you know FITS has gone global? Studies are now underway in eight countries. Gerber will continue to leverage this very important research to develop products and services that support a healthy start to nourish a healthier generation, one baby at a time.