

Lifestyle, preference, influence feeding method for infants

NEWARK, DE — "The decision to breast-feed or bottle-feed an infant is a personal one," says Dr. Sue Snider, University of Delaware extension food and nutrition specialist. "Each family must take into account its lifestyle and preferences."

In one generation the United States has gone from a predominantly breast-feeding to a predominantly formula-feeding society. However, the trend is beginning to reverse and more women are deciding to breast-feed their infants. Each woman should

make her decision free from both medical and social pressures, says Snider.

Human milk is regarded as the most desirable source of nutrients for the infant. According to the specialist, it contains ideal amounts of proteins and fats in a readily digestible form. In addition, the iron in human milk is more easily absorbed than that in cow's milk, she says.

"Besides nutrition, overfeeding and infant obesity are concerns," notes Snider. "Some studies show a higher rate of obesity in formula-fed infants than breast-fed ones.

When a mother sees formula remaining in a bottle she often encourages a baby to finish it all—even after the baby is full. A breast-fed infant eats only to satisfy hunger.

"In addition, studies have shown that milk from nursing mothers contains more fat and protein toward the end of a feeding, which may signal an infant to feel satisfied," says the specialist. "Breast-feeding also tends to delay the introduction of solids which can add greatly to an infant's daily calories. And early introduction of solids may also lead to allergies later in life."

There is increasing evidence that newborns can acquire certain disease resistance from mother's milk while their own immune systems are maturing, says Snider. Human milk contains antibodies which may help protect breast-fed infants from intestinal infections.

Early maternal infant bonding can be critical to the later relationship between mother and child. Breast-feeding favors the development of this emotional bond while meeting an infant's most basic need for nourishment.

Another benefit to nursing mothers is the production of the hormone, oxytocin, which stimulates contraction of the uterus after childbirth and thus helps control blood loss.

Most women who choose to breast-feed enjoy the ease with which they feed their babies, particularly in the middle of the night. Time not spent sterilizing bottles and preparing formula can be used to enjoy and get to know the new family member.

In spite of all these advantages breast-feeding does have some disadvantages, Snider says. For example, many women now work outside their home, and the combination of breast-feeding an infant and working is not an easy one.

"A working woman may be able to continue nursing her baby if she can go home for lunch," says Snider. "She could also express and store her breast milk for the caregiver to feed the infant during the day. This would allow her to continue nursing without the a significant reduction in the amount of milk she produces.

"Another option a nursing mother has is to supplement the infant's diet with formula," says Snider. "Breast-feeding after returning to work takes planning, but it can be successfully achieved.

Breast-feeding may be difficult even for the woman who doesn't work outside the home. Because she is the sole provider of her infant's nourishment, her activities must revolve around the feeding schedule, or she must arrange for the infant to be bottle-fed when she's away at feeding time.

The specialist notes that there are times when breast-feeding is not recommended. If a mother is taking a drug that is excreted in her milk and is known to be potentially dangerous to infants, breast-feeding should be avoided. In these cases, an infant must be formula-fed.

"For breast-feeding to be successful and pleasant for mother and baby, a woman needs the emotional support of her family," says Snider. "If her husband is strongly opposed to breast-feeding, it may be best for everyone if she gives in gracefully and switches to formula feeding."

Formula Feeding

"Although breast milk is regarded as the most desirable source of nutrients for infants, mothers who choose to formula-feed should be assured that their infants will grow and develop normally," says Dr. Sue Snider. Commercial formulas now

closely approximate the nutritional characteristics of human milk, says the specialist. In addition, special formulas are available for low birthweight infants and those with severe allergies. Snider cautions against using cow's milk during a baby's first year. "Cow's milk doesn't supply nutrients in proper amounts for a growing baby," she says.

One advantage of bottle-feeding is that other family members can get involved during the infant's mealtime. This helps develop family unity and allows a mother some free time for rest and relaxation. Formula-feeding may also provide a less stressful transition for a woman returning to work—a caregiver can easily bottle-feed her baby.

Unlike breast milk, which is ready to feed whenever an infant is hungry, formula must be prepared beforehand. "Read directions carefully," advises Snider. "Some

commercial formulas are ready to feed. They only need to be placed in sterile bottles and heated. But liquid and powder concentrates must be mixed with water before feeding. If a formula is mixed incorrectly, it may be either too diluted or too concentrated for a baby. Either way, it's improper nutrition."

Snider cautions against contaminating the formula during preparation. "First, take care to wash your hands and all utensils, including the outside of the cans of formula, bottles and nipples."

Once opened, cans of formula should be covered and refrigerated. Formula left in a bottle after a feeding must be discarded, says Snider, as the baby's saliva has contaminated it.

Finally, don't force a baby to finish the formula in a bottle when he or she is obviously satisfied. Snider says frequent overfeeding can lead to an overweight baby.

Store breast milk properly

NEWARK, DE — There are many reasons a mother may want to express her breast milk to feed her infant at a later time. She may have work hours that cause her to miss scheduled feedings. Or an occasional meeting may conflict with feeding time. She may just need a break from the constant demands of her infant. But whatever the reason, she should store the expressed milk properly to ensure adequate nutrition for her baby.

"Folic acid, a B vitamin essential to the body's use of protein and the formation of blood and genetic material, is perishable under certain conditions," says Dr. Sue Snider, University of Delaware extension food and nutrition specialist.

Snider says recent studies indicate that

breast milk stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours or less provides the recommended daily allowances (RDA) of both folic acid and vitamin C for infants up to 6 months old. Even after three months of storage in the freezer, vitamin C levels are adequate for infants. But after only one month of freezer storage the level of folic acid drops below the RDA for infants.

Other research shows that human milk keeps best when stored in the back of the freezer rather than in the freezer door.

"Feeding infants human milk from a bottle can be a great convenience," says Snider. "But if frozen or stored milk is fed frequently, take care that the storage time and conditions don't affect the nutritional quality of the milk."

Baby's development determines when to introduce solids

NEWARK, DE — Parents often wonder when to start feeding their babies solid foods, and what these first foods should be.

Babies vary in their growth, development and readiness for different foods," says Dr. Sue Snider, University of Delaware extension food and nutrition specialist. "It's always wise to check with your pediatrician about special nutritional needs, but there are some general guidelines to follow.

"Babies used to be given solids before they were a month old," says the specialist. "But we now know that this frequently causes allergic reactions. In addition, an infant's suck-and-swallow reflex makes it difficult to actually eat much solid food at an early age. This reflex begins to disappear between four and six months of age, coinciding with a baby's increased growth and development

which requires more nutrients than can be supplied by breast milk or formula alone. So at about this age, other foods are introduced."

Iron-fortified cereals are the first solid foods introduced in the diet because a baby's increasing need for iron can't be met by milk. Snider says these cereals are usually non-wheat to guard against possible allergic reactions. When a baby is six or seven months old, strained vegetables and fruit juices are added, says the specialist. Strained fruits and strained meats are usually included at about eight or nine months.

"Introduced solids in small amounts," recommends Snider, "starting with one teaspoon per day of a new food. And try only one new food at a time to make sure your baby isn't allergic to it. Check

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BACK HOME



By Michelle S. Rodgers

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Dance to the music.

Recently, a portion of our extended family enjoyed a Saturday evening out to dinner. The food was great, the laughter hearty, and the time together was most enjoyable. An additional highlight to the evening was the strolling "minstrel" with a folk guitar who was adept at playing requests. Our heartfelt applause was followed by the comment, "Our family really enjoys music!"

What happens during childhood that inspires one to enjoy music? How do families encourage the development of this form of enjoyment? We do know that throughout childhood, music is a potent and very physical force.

A rock'n'roll song often naturally sends baby in motion. Toddler, though not notable for keeping time to the beat, will happily clap, rock or sway when listening to music. As children approach age three, we begin to see something that looks more like dancing and moving roughly in time with the music.

Parents can play an important role in a child's enjoyment and exploration of music. Here are some good ideas to get you started.

Share the music you enjoy with your child. Don't feel that all the music you share with your child to be "children's music." Play what you like, whether it's classical, rock, country or disco. Watching adults enjoying music is the best initiation children have. I know that one of my favorite things was singing along while my mother played the piano, or singing to records. Often the stereo was our wake-up call, and on Sunday morning we would rise and shine to "Marcy's" recording of the song "Wake up, wake up you sleepy head!...it's time for Sunday School."

Encourage children to explore what they can do with their bodies and the different ways they move to the beat. Suppose you are listening to a lively song. Add some body movements of stepping,

sliding, skipping, bouncing, or stretching. Children enjoy this activity and learn naturally to pick up the rhythm.

As you listen to music, help your child to tune in. Discuss the mood, rhythm, tempo, volume, and other elements. Try to name the instruments. By pointing these things out to your child, you can increase their awareness and enjoyment. An easy way to experience this is to have your child march to the music. As the tempo changes, marching speed will change as well.

Provide your children with props for musical instruments. Try blocks of wood or sticks to tap together, sand paper blocks, bells, tambourines or drums. Whether bought or improvised from household objects, these instruments add an extra element to children's pleasure in rhythmic movement.

Evaluate the need for formal lessons. The age is not as important as the fact that the lessons are something that the child enjoys. And a little guidance and encouragement will probably be needed somewhere during the weeks of lessons. I've been grateful on many occasions that my parents continued to encourage me through my piano lessons. There were periods of time of hating to practice and dreading the lessons. What I didn't realize at that time was how valuable music would become to me. Playing the piano has been a way to relax and unwind, a creative outlet, and a real source of personal pleasure.

I believe that parents, by showing their own natural enjoyment of music, can give their children a gift of appreciation and encouragement that will last a lifetime. Few things are more infectious than the joy of music. I'm thankful for my musical upbringing. Who would have known that I would marry a music major and inherit another musical family.

