



The First Nutritional Guidelines for FPIES

The Nutritional Management of FPIES:

Feeding Your Baby with FPIES

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Parents often worry about their babies' nutrition. Infants do have great nutritional needs, and they grow so rapidly in the first year of life. At no other time do children triple their weight in just one year! As a parent of a child with FPIES, you may be worried too. Although some babies with FPIES may grow poorly prior to the diagnosis, once the offending food is removed and adequate nutrition is provided, your baby can quickly catch-up.

Growing well is the best indicator that your baby is well-fed.¹ An infant's growth is normally monitored on a *growth chart*. Plotting your baby's growth on a growth chart helps your doctor compare your baby's size to other babies of the same age and gender. Some babies are larger and some are smaller. This is normal. The most important information provided by a growth chart is the consistency of your baby's growth.² It is usually expected that infants will maintain their rate of growth (or their growth percentile) or at least stay fairly close to it. For example, a baby born between the 25th and 50th percentile for weight and height will likely continue to grow within or somewhat close to this percentile range. Many parents worry that their baby is not eating enough, but with a very consistent growth pattern we can see if a baby is getting enough to eat.

On the other hand, a baby's growth (either height or weight percentiles) may change. Sometimes this means the baby is not getting enough nutrition, but it can also be a very normal adjustment in the child's growth patterns. A doctor will look at many features to determine if a baby is growing well. This can be a distressing time for parents, but your doctor will let you know if there is cause for concern. If nutritional intake is not sufficient, poor growth can be rectified with the input and support from a dietitian and your doctor.

When Is Breast Milk Not Enough?

For babies with FPIES, breastfeeding can typically continue without interruption. Rarely, a mother may be asked to exclude some foods from her diet. If you require an elimination diet, a dietitian

should review your diet and may ask you to supplement certain nutrients. Adequate nutrition for your baby means appropriate calories, proteins, carbohydrates and fats, as well as vitamins, minerals and fluids. While breast milk is the ideal food for babies, at some point, breast milk alone simply does not provide adequate nutrition. For one thing, breast milk alone after six months of age might not provide adequate calories for your baby to grow properly.¹

Breast milk is also low in iron, which is an important nutrient for infant growth and cognitive development.³ If a mother's iron stores during pregnancy were sufficient, a baby is born with an iron

supply that will last until about four months of age. After four months of age, an additional iron source will be required.³ This is the time when iron-enriched cereals are typically introduced. Iron-enriched cereals might not be an option for some babies with FPIES to grains such as rice, oat and barley, so supplementation may be important. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends iron supplementation (1 mg iron/kg body weight) after four months of age for babies who continue to breast feed exclusively and iron-enriched formula for those infants who are bottle-fed.³

Calcium and Vitamin D are also two nutrients of importance for the development of strong bones and the immune system. The AAP recommends Vitamin D supplementation (400 IU) beginning shortly after birth for all breastfeeding infants and infants receiving less than 32 ounces or one liter of infant formula.⁴

In some cases, supplemental foods (if tolerated), a supplemental formula, and/or micronutrient supplementation may be suggested by a doctor, especially if an older baby is not growing sufficiently. If your baby is already on a formula, your doctor or dietitian can give you advice on either increasing the volume of formula taken or concentrating the formula to better meet nutritional needs.

Infant Formula

When a formula is desired either for complete nutrition or to supplement a restricted diet, a suitable formula should be suggested by a healthcare professional who has experience working with children with FPIES.

Extensively hydrolyzed casein formulas and amino acid-based formulas are recommended for infants with FPIES.⁵ These formulas are considered hypoallergenic and are typically well tolerated. Infants, particularly breastfed infants, may initially refuse these formulas due to taste. A dietitian can give useful advice on how to overcome this problem. One solution may be to mix a small amount of the hypoallergenic formula with the breast milk and very gradually increase the amount of hypoallergenic formula to breast milk. Flavoring may also be added to the recommended formula (e.g., a few drops of vanilla) but you should try to stop using these within a few days. Many parents worry about the corn oil and corn syrup solids in most formulas, but these corn ingredients do not contain corn protein and are not considered allergenic for those with corn allergy.

Feeding and Developmental Needs

In addition to nutritional needs, babies have developmental needs associated with eating. During the first year of life, your baby has a lot to learn about eating. A healthy baby is born with the ability to coordinate sucking, breathing and swallowing and so can nurse or take a bottle without your teaching him to do so. All other feeding skills, however, are learned and your baby will need the presentation of foods of appropriate textures to learn these skills. There appears to be critical periods in a baby's development when chewing and taste acceptance are more easily learned. For instance, when textured foods are introduced after ten months of age, children are more likely to refuse solid foods; therefore, it is best if feeding opportunities can be presented to your baby when developmentally appropriate.⁶

The extrusion reflex, or your baby's tendency to push foods out of the mouth with the tongue, typically diminishes by six months of age...just when your baby will need the addition of solid, pureed foods to his/her diet. Another developmental sign of readiness is that your baby can sit with

2

assistance for short periods of time. Table 1 outlines the developmental skills associated with different feeding stages. Typically, at around six months of age, your baby will be ready for complimentary solid, pureed foods. Learning to remove foods from a spoon usually begins with the presentation of thin purees. With spoon feeding, your baby will work on the skills of removing food from a spoon with the lips, holding food in the mouth (and not pushing it out) as well as moving and shaping the food with the tongue to prepare for swallowing. ⁶As your baby gets better at these and other feeding skills, you can progress to thicker purees, then eventually lumpier purees and finally on to soft finger foods.

Feeding appropriate textures can, of course, be more challenging for a child with food allergies, especially for a child with FPIES when you are unsure what foods will be safe. Your doctor can help you determine what foods might be safe to try first. Remember, even if your baby has a very limited diet, a little creativity with the safe ingredients at your disposal will provide the textures necessary. For instance, a diet of only sweet potato can provide multiple textures. It can be mixed with breast milk (or your baby's safe substitute formula) into a smooth, thin or thick puree, mashed so that it has some lumps and bumps, or soft cooked and chopped so it provides an appropriate finger food texture. It can even be fried in a highly refined oil to provide some crunchy or crispier textures for older toddlers. Highly refined oils do not contain allergenic proteins so they are typically a safe option for children with food allergies.⁷

What to Feed

What to feed your baby is based on nutrition as well as developmental readiness and developmental needs. For those with FPIES, there are additional considerations. For instance, infants with cow's milk or soy FPIES have a greater chance of developing solid food FPIES, most commonly to rice and other grains.⁸ Therefore, introduction of yellow fruits and vegetables are often recommended prior to introduction of grains.⁹ Tolerance of one food from each higher risk food group (for example, soy for legumes, chicken for poultry, or oat for grains) is a sign that your baby may tolerate other foods from that same food group.⁹ Please ask your doctor to help you decide what foods to introduce first to your baby.

Although nutrition is quite important, remember that with careful planning, we can meet nutritional needs in older infants with supplements to breastfeeding or the proper concentration and volume of infant formula potentially with vitamin and mineral supplementation. Finding appropriate textures will require some creativity when multiple solid foods are restricted. Remember, even if you have only one food, you can provide many textures to help your baby develop the feeding skills needed as he/she grows up with eating. Table 2 shows how various foods may be used to provide a variety of textures that may be appropriate for your baby if any one of these foods is tolerated. Also see Table 3 for additional feeding tips.

FPIES can make feeding your baby more challenging but a proper diet, guided by your doctor and dietitian, and providing safe and appropriate textures will help you meet your baby's nutritional and developmental needs. 3

References

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