

Infant Developmental Readiness & the CACFP Meal Pattern

What does DEVELOPMENTALLY READY really mean?!

Around 6 months of age infants begin to show signs that they are ready for solid foods. Signs that can help determine that an infant is ready for solid foods might be:

- Sits in a chair with good head control
- Opens his/her mouth for food
- Can move food from a spoon into his/her throat
- Doubled his/her birthweight and weighs at least 13 pounds

As a provider, constant communication with the parent regarding when and what solid foods should be introduced is key.



Once a child is developmentally ready, do they need all the components at all meals?

No, not right away. Often parents start with one food type (vegetables for example) at one meal. The infant may simply eat vegetables for lunch only for a week or two before adding vegetables to breakfast. During this period the infant may also start iron fortified infant cereal (IFIC). For a couple weeks the infant might have vegetables and IFIC at breakfast and lunch with their breastmilk/ iron fortified infant formula. Once an infant is tolerating vegetables/fruits consistently at breakfast and lunch then vegetables/ fruits become required at snack. Most infants are tolerating most foods around 7-8 months of age.

Keep in mind the vegetable/ fruit serving size at snack is only 1-2 tablespoons.

Isn't that a lot of food for an infant at snack?

Take a look at the portions you are offering to your infants and compare that to the minimum portion sizes that are required. *Keep in mind three things:*

- 1) **The required portion sizes are tiny**, especially at snack. Up to 2 Tablespoons of vegetables/ fruit are required (2 slices of banana, a couple berries, left over vegetables from lunch or a few frozen peas would count). The same is true for the grain (2 crackers, 1-4 Tablespoons of Cheerios/Kix/Life Cereals or ½ slice of bread).
- 2) **Snack time is a great opportunity for the infant to practice finger foods** and feeding themselves. This is a great activity to keep the infant engaged.
- 3) **Infant snack is not required to be at the same time as everyone else's snack.** Infants do not eat on a schedule nor do all components need to be served at the same time. An infant may have their bottle before nap and their fruit/vegetable and grain after nap or vice versa. Infants dictate their own feeding schedule.

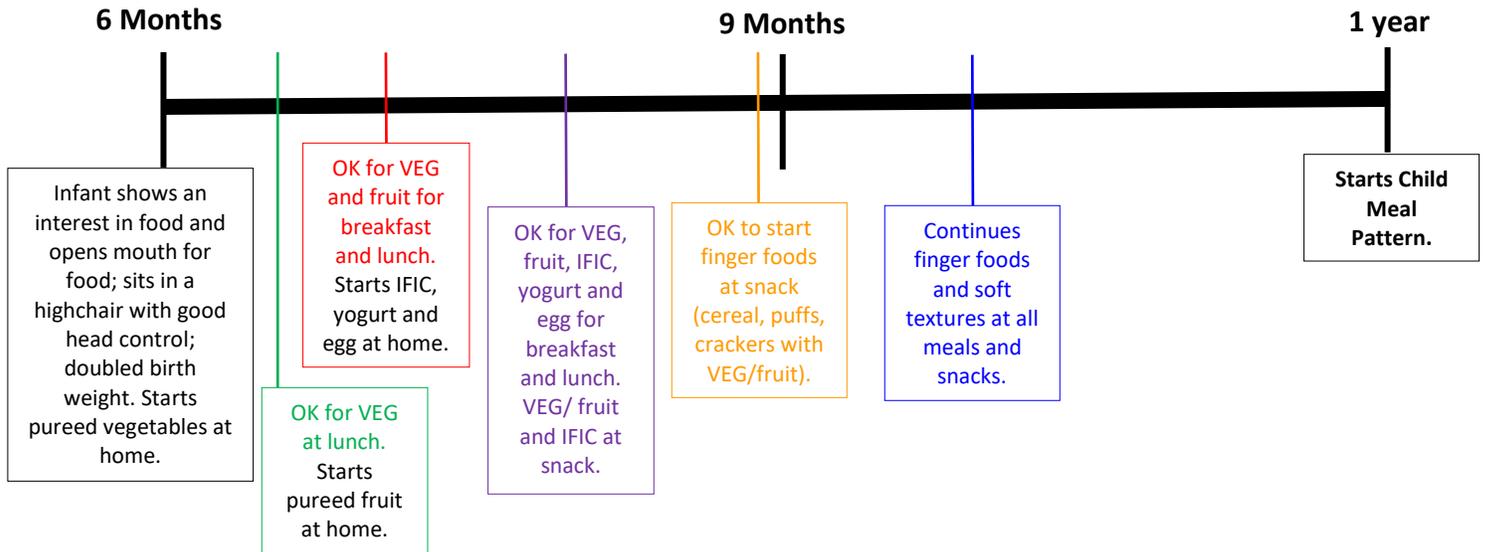
Keep in mind – the provider must always follow the parent's wishes. Whatever the parent wants is what needs to be followed. A parent can choose what is or what is not given to the child.

Documentation – Once you begin offering solid foods (vegetables, fruits, iron fortified infant cereal, etc.) it must be documented on the menu.

The purpose of vegetable/ fruit at snack is to increase fruit and vegetable exposure/consumption to infants because most children, including infants do not consume enough vegetables and fruit.

Sample Infant Solid Foods & the CACFP Timeline

Note: This is an example only, all infants are different and progress at their own timeline.



Sample Infant Snacks



1-2 slices banana,
1-4 Tablespoons Cheerios



1-2 Tablespoons black beans,
1-2 crackers



1-2 Tablespoons peas,
1-4 Tablespoons Goldfish Crackers



1-2 Tablespoons pears,
1-4 Tablespoons Kix



1-2 Tablespoons raspberries,
1-4 Tablespoons puffs

Fruit & Vegetable Ideas:

Applesauce
Avocado
Banana
Blueberries (halved)
Beans
Broccoli (steamed)
Butternut Squash
Cauliflower (steamed)
Green Beans

Peaches
Pears
Peas
Potatoes/ Sweet Potatoes
Raspberries
Strawberries
Yellow Squash/Zucchini
Watermelon

Grain Ideas:

Animal Crackers
Bread/ Toast
Cereal (Cheerios, Kix, Life, etc)
Crackers (Club, Goldfish, Saltine, Ritz)
Graham crackers
Muffin
Puffs