

- It is very important to wash your hands at a “clean” sink before feeding a child or preparing any food. A “clean” sink is a sink that has been sanitized or a sink where no washing after diapering or toileting takes place.
- Make sure when preparing infant cereal or getting water for a child to drink, water is taken from a “clean” sink.
- It is recommended to wait until an infant is 4 to 6 months before introducing baby food unless otherwise advised by a physician. If solids are added before 4 to 6 months, allergies and eating/feeding problems may develop because the infant is not physically able to handle the food. Feeding solids earlier will not help an infant sleep for longer periods.
- Signs that an infant is ready for solids: can sit with support; can hold his head up without help; can reach for things and hold them; can watch food, wait with mouth open, and then close his mouth over the food.
- Infant cereal is recommended to offer as the first solid food to an infant (with parent’s permission). Rice is typically the first to try. Mix cereal with breast milk or formula. Keep it very thin to prevent choking; gradually increasing the thickness of the consistency over time. If using formula, it is recommended to prepare the formula according to the manufacturer’s directions and then add to dry cereal. It is not recommended to guess at amounts by dumping formula powder and cereal in a bowl, and then adding water for the right consistency.
- Introduce a small amount (about 1-2 teaspoons) of a new food at first. This allows an infant to adapt to a food’s flavor and texture.
- Ask parents for a list of foods, if any, that each infant has reactions to or which should not be fed to the infant before giving any food.
- Feed infants only foods that have been previously introduced, with no problems, by the infant’s parents.
- Introduce one new food at a time. Single-ingredient foods are best to use at first. Wait at least 2-3 days before starting a new food. This allows you to identify a food easily if an allergic reaction occurs.
- The following foods should be **avoided until an infant is 1 year or older** due to the chance of an allergic response: cow’s milk, eggs, and peanut products. Fish is another food that may cause allergies. Due to the discrepancy among physicians, it is best to ask parents to see what their infant’s physician recommends as far as what foods to offer and when.

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- Children under one year of age should not be given honey. This also includes foods that contain honey. Infants under 12 months who consume honey can develop a serious illness called botulism.
- Always check the expiration date on all containers of baby food.
- Wash off all jars of baby food with soap and water before opening the jars.
- Make sure the jar lid is sealed and has not been broken before opening it. If the seal has not been broken, you should hear a “pop” noise when you open the lid of the jar.
- Do not tap the jar lid or bang it to open it. This could break glass chips into the food.
- Do not microwave baby food jars. Put baby food jar in warm water to heat. Do not feed child directly from the jar. Spoon food onto separate dish for feeding. Always examine, stir, and test food before serving it to a child. To test food, drop some food on the top of your hand from the spoon. If the spoon touches your hand, it is recommended to get a clean spoon for feeding.
- Unused portions in opened jars can be stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours.
- Make sure refrigerator temperature is 40 degrees F or below – use thermometer, check and record daily.
- It is important for infants to have their hands washed with soap and water before and after they eat solid food.
- It is a good idea to use a bib to protect the children’s clothing. Please make sure that the bib is clean. It is not recommended to re-use a bib unless it is laundered or washed between uses.
- Always clean and sanitize the highchair tray before placing an infant in the highchair to eat.
- Always place food on a plate or in a bowl instead of placing food directly on table or highchair tray. It is more sanitary and it is more respectful of the infant.
- Styrofoam cups, plates, and bowls, as well as plastic utensils are not recommended to use with infants due to possible choking hazards.
- Sit at the child’s level when eating so you can have eye contact with the child. It is recommended to feed no more than three infants at a time if you are spoon feeding to prevent the spread of germs.
- Expect children to get messy. Remember they need to learn how to eat. Please do not hold down their hands if you are feeding them. If they are grabbing for the spoon, give them one to hold while you feed them.
- Make sure all food is age appropriate – for example, do not introduce finger foods until the child can pick up food by herself, has some teeth, has good head and neck control, and can sit in a highchair.

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- Be aware of foods that are considered to be choking hazards. Cut infant food into chunks ¼ inch or smaller. In addition to the size of food, take into consideration how the infant eats (does the infant stuff many pieces of food into his/her mouth at once?) and how many teeth the infant has.
- Never leave infants alone or turn your back on them while they are eating, even for a second. Stay within an arm's reach if possible.
- Never allow infants to eat while walking or lying down.
- Infants do not need juice unless their stools become hard from under-hydration or introduction of solids. If juice is given, the recommended **serving size is only 2-4 oz per day**.
- Juice should be fed by cup rather than by bottle to decrease the occurrence of dental caries. Only 100% pasteurized juice should be given to children.
- Sippy cups are **not** recommended, due to their link to speech problems, tooth decay, and hygienic hazards. A lidless cup should be used instead. Sippy cups should not be reused throughout the day, even if stored in the refrigerator. Cups should be used for one meal only, then emptied and washed. Children should not be allowed to walk around with a cup or have one in their crib.
- Bottles, cups, dishware, and utensils that have been dropped on the floor should always be washed off or replaced before giving back to the child.

Sources used: "Caring for Our Children" National Health & Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2002.

"Feeding Infants: A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs", United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 2001.

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Eastern North Dakota 800-941-7003 or 218-299-7026 ~ Western North Dakota 888-223-1510 or 701-223-1510

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