

introduction of solids is a type of forced feeding that may lead to excessive weight gain and increased predisposition to allergies and iron-deficiency anemia. Parents should be cautioned concerning the use of juices and nonnutritive drinks such as fruit-flavored drinks or carbonated beverages (soda or pop) during this period. Many juices and nonnutritive drinks, although readily available to consumers, do not provide sufficient and appropriate caloric intake for infants younger than 12 months old; such drinks may replace the nutrients in breast milk or formula and lead to growth or health problems. Fruit juices are not required in the first 6 months; no studies have demonstrated benefits of giving fruit juice to infants.

## **The Second 6 Months**

During the second half of the first year, human milk or formula should continue to be the primary source of nutrition. The use of fluoride supplementation depends on the infant's intake of fluoride tap water (see [Dental Health](#) later in this chapter). If breastfeeding is discontinued, a commercial iron-fortified formula should be substituted. Follow-up or transition formulas marketed for older infants offer no special advantages over other infant formulas and provide excessive protein ([American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Nutrition, 2014](#)).

The major change in feeding habits is the addition of solid foods to the infant's diet. Physiologically and developmentally, infants 4 to 6 months old are in a transition period. By this time, the gastrointestinal tract has matured sufficiently to handle more complex nutrients and is less sensitive to potentially allergenic foods. Tooth eruption is beginning and facilitates biting and chewing. The extrusion reflex has disappeared, and swallowing is more coordinated to allow infants to accept solids easily. Head control is well developed, which permits infants to sit with support and purposely turn their heads away to communicate lack of interest in food. Voluntary grasping and improved eye-hand coordination gradually allow infants to pick up finger foods and feed themselves. Their increasing sense of independence is evident in their desire to hold their bottles and try to “help” during feeding.

## **Selection and Preparation of Solid Foods**