

delayed until after 6 months old because of their potential to result in allergy. At 6 months old, foods such as a cracker or zwieback can be offered as finger and teething foods. By 8 to 9 months old, junior foods and nutritious finger foods such as firmly cooked vegetable, raw pieces of fruit, or cheese can be given. By 1 year old, well-cooked table foods are served.

The introduction of solid foods into the infant's diet at this age is primarily for taste and chewing experience, not for growth. The majority of infants' caloric needs are derived from the primary milk source (human or formula); therefore, solids should not be perceived as a substitute for milk until the child is older than 12 months old. Portion sizes may vary according to the infant's taste. In general, 1 Tbsp. per year of age (i.e., $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ Tbsp. for most infants under 12 months old) is adequate for most infants. In most cases, 2 Tbsp. may be served, but because of infants' focus on the texture and feel of the food, smaller amounts will be consumed. Another reason for smaller portions is the concern over feeding habits in early childhood and obesity; early feeding of smaller portions may help prevent the "clean your plate" or "eat all your food or you can't get down from the table" concepts, which are known to contribute to overeating in later life. The addition of solid foods to exclusively breastfed infants' diet does not significantly increase overall caloric intake or weight gain.

Commercially prepared baby foods are the most common type of food served to infants in the United States. They are convenient and usually contain no added salt or sugar but can be relatively expensive. An alternative is to prepare baby foods at home, which is a simple and inexpensive process.

In general, low-calorie milk and foods should be avoided in infants and toddlers unless a strict medically prescribed diet is required. Infants' growth during this phase is crucial to future development, and dietary fat should be curtailed with great caution. At the same time, it is important to recognize that certain types of dietary fat are unacceptable for infants; fried potatoes, candy, ice cream, cake, soda pop and other sweetened drinks, and other such items do not constitute an appropriate amount of fat intake and may contribute to childhood obesity. One suggestion is to limit the *amount* (serving size) of dietary fat in foods provided rather than eliminate them altogether, especially during infancy.