

to food flavors of the family's culture is common in addition to continuing breastfeeding for 2 to 4 years (see [Cultural Considerations](#) box).

Cultural Considerations

Multicultural Feeding Practices

Cultural beliefs and values often influence infant-feeding practices. Health care professionals may benefit from understanding the multicultural feeding practices that parents choose for their infants. Traditional feeding practices include offering a variety of liquids or foods (such as sugared wine, water, or honey) during the first few days of life and thereafter.

Bottled water for mixing powdered or concentrated formula is a relatively safe alternative to tap water if available. Tap water has a high content of contaminants, such as lead. Do not assume, however, that bottled water is sterile unless specifically stated on the container. Fluoridated bottled water is not necessary for mixing powdered formula unless the local water source is low in fluoride, in which case fluoride supplementation is recommended after 6 months old (see [Dental Health](#) later in this chapter).

The addition of solid foods before 4 to 6 months old is not recommended. During the early months, solid foods are not compatible with the ability of the gastrointestinal tract and infant's nutritional needs. Feeding solids to young infants exposes them to food antigens that may produce food protein allergy. Ample evidence indicates that early introduction of foods other than maternal milk in the first 6 months of life predisposes children to an increased risk for food allergy development; foods known to be allergenic (e.g., peanuts, eggs, fish, seafood) should be introduced later than 9 months old according to the child's risk for atopy ([Heinrich, Koletzko, and Koletzko, 2014](#)).

Developmentally, infants are not ready for solid food. The extrusion (protrusion) reflex is strong and often causes them to push food out of the mouth. Infants instinctively suck when given food. Because of their limited motor abilities, infants are unable to deliberately push food away or avoid feeding. Therefore, early