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TOPICS IN PEDIATRICS

Guidelines for complementary feeding in healthy infants[☆]



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KEYWORDS

Complementary feedings;
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PALABRAS CLAVE

Alimentación complementaria;
Lactantes sanos;
Recomendaciones

Abstract A proper nutrition during the first two years of life is critical to reach the full potential of every human being. To the present day, this period is recognized as a *critical window* for promoting optimal growth, development, and good health. Therefore, adequate feeding at this stage of life has an impact on health, nutritional status, growth and development of children; not only in the short term but in the medium and long term. This paper provides recommendations on complementary feeding (CF) presented as questions or statements that are important for those who take care for children during this stage of life. For example: When to start complementary feedings; Exposure to potentially allergenic foods; Introduction of sweetened beverages; Use of artificial sweeteners and light products; Food introduction sequence; Food consistency changes according to neurological maturation; Number of days to test acceptance and tolerance to new foods; Amounts for each meal; Inadequate complementary feeding practices; Myths and realities of complementary feeding; Developmental milestones; Practice of Baby Led Weaning or vegetarianism.

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Consenso para las prácticas de alimentación complementaria en lactantes sanos

Resumen La nutrición adecuada durante los primeros dos años de vida es fundamental para el desarrollo pleno del potencial de cada ser humano; actualmente se reconoce que este periodo es una *ventana crítica* para la promoción de un crecimiento y desarrollo óptimos y un buen estado de salud. Por tanto, cumplir con una alimentación adecuada en esta etapa de la vida tiene impacto sobre la salud, estado de nutrición, crecimiento y desarrollo de los niños; no sólo en el corto plazo, sino en el mediano y largo plazo. El presente trabajo ofrece recomendaciones de alimentación complementaria (AC) que se presentan en forma de preguntas o enunciados que consideran temas importantes para quienes atienden niños durante esta etapa de la vida; por ejemplo: inicio de la alimentación complementaria; exposición a alimentos potencialmente alergénicos; introducción de bebidas azucaradas; uso de edulcorantes artificiales y productos *light*; secuencia de introducción de alimentos; modificaciones de consistencia de alimentos de acuerdo a la maduración neurológica; número de días para probar aceptación y tolerancia a los alimentos nuevos; cantidades por cada tiempo de comida; prácticas inadecuadas de alimentación complementaria; mitos y realidades de la alimentación complementaria; hitos del desarrollo; práctica del *Baby Led Weaning* y del vegetarianismo.

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1. Introduction

A proper nutrition during the first two years of life is crucial for achieving the full potential of every human being. This stage is characterized by its rapid growth rate, which imposes higher energy and nutrients required, and gets infants who are exposed to faulty feeding practices into nutritional risk. It is now recognized that the period from birth to two years old is a *critical window* for promoting optimal growth and development, and good health.¹ Longitudinal studies have consistently shown that this is the stage of more increased risk for growth and development deceleration, micronutrient deficiencies and common diseases such as diarrhea. In the long-term, early nutritional scarcities

are related to poorer work capacity, intellectual performance, reproductive health, and overall health status during adolescence and adulthood. Inadequate breastfeeding and complementary feeding, along with the high prevalence of infectious diseases, are the leading cause of malnutrition in the early years of life. Also, it is now known that the caloric and the deficient or excessive consumption of some nutrients can influence early metabolic programming with long-term consequences, including on the onset of adult chronic disease.²

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has highlighted the crucial role of breastfeeding and complementary feeding as the preventive intervention with the most significant impact on child

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