

Pediatric Nutrition Breakthroughs: 5 Advances Every Practitioner Should Know

Webinar Questions Answered by Jill Castle, MS, RDN

- Do you recommend iron supplementation for breastfed infants after 4 months?

Yes, the AAP recommends breastfed babies take an iron supplement starting at 4 months of age. Babies drinking infant formula should choose iron-fortified types, and if so, they do not need an additional iron supplement.

- What DHA supplements for mom do you recommend? And at what level?

It is recommended that DHA supplementation for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers be taking 200 mg DHA per day. <https://jillcastle.com/childhood-nutrition/dha-benefits-brain/>

- Your slide on nutrient recommendations for infants/toddlers' states "fortified eggs", can you explain what is meant by this further (not sure what fortified eggs is)?

That means DHA-fortified eggs.

- Are skin conditions, such as eczema, associated more with a particular type of food/group?

Eggs seem to have the strongest evidence for atopic dermatitis, but other allergens may play a role.

- What food(s) would you introduce first/between the allergen foods? E.g. introduce cereal fist, then peanuts, then avocado, then egg, etc.?

There isn't a recommendation for "which food first," however, it's advised that parents start with nutrient-rich foods targeting iron sources and to not start with the big 8 allergens as first foods. Get baby used to eating iron-fortified cereal, meats (for both iron and zinc), or fruit or veggies, for example, then swirl in some nut butter or peanut powder.

- As related to food allergies: what is the recommended practice for introducing potential allergens to babies from a family with known food allergies?

Talk with doctor and try to introduce between 4-6 months.

- Babies who have a mild allergic reaction to egg say at 8 months, would you try again to introduce this at 1 year? or would you wait?

If the reaction isn't severe, I would try cooked egg (baked products, then scrambled egg, for example) again within the first year.

- Is this recommending starting to introduce foods at 4 months vs 6 to increase their chances of accepting veggies?

Yes, offering tastes of flavor early allows baby to learn about flavor, also called flavor learning/training. Introduce complementary foods at around 6 months or when baby shows developmental readiness. Complementary foods are supposed to provide nutrition to baby. In contrast, flavor learning is not EATING and not a source of NUTRITION, but it allows baby to taste a very small amount for the purpose of flavor exposure and learning between 4-6 months.

- The guideline is to feed breast milk exclusively through 6 months but how do you also give babies different tasting foods 4-6 months with this guideline?

See above; flavor learning is not for nutrition but to build exposure and the palate for a variety of flavors.

- What about kids who accepted a large variety of vegetables, meats, and mixed dishes until around 2-2.5 years of age, but then start exercising their opinion and no longer choosing to eat those things. Is this common? Does it resolve eventually if the foods are still offered at family meals?

Yes, this is very common and called picky eating. For most kids, this is a phase of food neophobia (fear of new food), food jags, and as you say, exerting the developmental right to refuse food. Parents do well when they keep offering a variety of food, stay neutral and diplomatic in feeding, and do not react to their child's erratic eating. I dive into this in my book [Try New Food](#).

- Flavor learning guideline - do you give the same new food 5 days in a row then switch to another flavor the next week? Or vary flavors each day?

The study I referred to gave the same veggie 3 days in a row; varied 3 veggies 3 days in a row; or changed to a different veggie each day for three days in a row. The frequent variety (new veggie every day for three days in a row) showed the most promise for vegetable acceptance later.

- Is the new direction of breastfeeding baby should not get water in between?

Correct. The current guidance is breastmilk or infant formula for the first year as primary beverages. Water is not needed in first 6 months; can introduce fluoridated water around 6 months (4 to 8 ounces per day)

- Do you recommend testing zinc and/or iron in infants who are not taking in sufficient sources in their diet?

Babies are not typically tested for zinc; iron is tested at 1 year via finger prick test. If you know baby isn't getting enough, you can discuss testing with pediatrician, however, I would help the parents choose iron rich food sources and incorporate them in the diet right away. A deficiency

in iron early in life (iron deficiency anemia) may have long-term cognitive effects that are not reversible (and do not show up for a decade, potentially).

- I thought a part of spoon feeding was for speech development. Is this an issue when using BLW?

All babies need to learn to eat from the spoon, eventually. Learning to eat is tied to language development, but I'm not sure the exact relationship between spoon-feeding and language skills. This is a good question for a speech-language therapist.

- What is the latest research on heavy metals in infant cereals? What should we be recommending now that they have found high levels of heavy metals in baby food?

I wrote about this here: <https://thenourishedchild.com/toxins-in-baby-food/> and did a video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxj2AD9SOOg&t=10s>

- How do you feel about the one bite rule?

I say put yourself in the child's shoes. Is it a positive experience or not? If it is negative for the child, then I'd find other ways to encourage new foods (and good thing there's a lot of fun ways to help kids try new food (outlined in my book, Try New Food!).

- Would several food allergies discovered at young age perhaps lead to ARFID?

Yes, that's possible. There is a condition called Eosinophilic Esophagitis (EoE) that occurs due to an allergic reaction to foods. I have had several ARFID clients who were diagnosed with EoE.

- At what age can you start seeing ARFID? Can it start as early as 14 months?

Picky eating from age 2-6 years is considered "normal." If picky eating is getting worse as the child gets older (rather than better), I would start to look deeper for ARFID and its underlying reasons.

- Do you see ARFID in children with a history of GERD, possibly due to association of pain with eating?

Yes, I have seen this. Chronic GERD can actually be EoE and I've seen kids with GERD ultimately get diagnosed with EoE (eosinophilic esophagitis).

- Best way to treat ARFID as a teen to young adult? What strategies would you recommend?

These are good resources for the older teen/adult: https://www.amazon.com/Conquer-Picky-Eating-Teens-Adults/dp/1986385930/ref=sr_1_8?crid=1SPUI0R7K6AF2&dchild=1&keywords=extreme+picky+eating&qid=1615827353&sprefix=extreme+picky+%2Caps%2C150&sr=8-8 and https://www.amazon.com/Cognitive-Behavioral-Therapy-Avoidant-Restrictive-Disorder/dp/1108401155/ref=sr_1_5?crid=1SPUI0R7K6AF2&dchild=1&keywords=extreme+picky+eating&qid=1615827376&sprefix=extreme+picky+%2Caps%2C150&sr=8-5

I would just say that the individual needs to be on board – meaning, there's a lot of work to do and the individual needs to *want* to get better.

- Is there a correlation between ARFID and prematurity?

I am not sure; it makes sense to me that a preemie who has tubes and procedures around the mouth could develop a negative association and/or become more sensitive to stimuli in that area.

- Recommendations to get a toddler to eat more if they are very picky eaters?

Feed frequently (3 meals + 3 nutritious snacks per day); make sure nutrient-dense foods are part of the plan; boost calories in foods where it makes sense and doesn't change the flavor/textured too much (this can change accepted foods, resulting in dislike). If adding a supplemental beverage, try Orgain's protein drink for kids.

- Interesting regarding vit A in vegans, would that be attributed to low fat intake and absorption?

Yes, perhaps. Also, in general, all kids, regardless of diet, are not meeting vegetable intake guidelines, so that may be a contributor as well.

- If a child refuses to drink milk (cow or plant based fortified), but does eat yogurt and cheese, do you recommend a vit D supplement?

I would, yes, because not all yogurts are fortified with vitamin D and most cheeses are not fortified. It is very hard to meet vitamin D requirements with food, and while sunshine can help, many kids wear sunscreen which blocks the activation of vitamin D in the skin.

- Is there a book that you can recommend for teen vegetarians/vegans?

I do not know of one, but you can try the Vegetarian Resource Group (vrg.org) – they are a trusted resource for me.

- Any recommendations/resources for helping T1D toddlers establish healthy eating habits despite additional constraints to eating and the mealtime environment associated with insulin dosing, BG, etc.?

I do not have expertise in T1D, but I would encourage you to look up Sylvia White, RD. She does a lot of work in this area.

- Is it too late to introduce a vitamin D supplement to a 6mo infant?

Never too late!

- Any good resources you have for parents with kids with ARFID?

My Book Try New Food, Stories of Extreme Picky Eating, and the other books I mentioned above. I have also written a few articles about it:

<https://jillcastle.com/childhood-nutrition/arfid-treatment/> ,
<https://jillcastle.com/childhood-nutrition/does-my-child-have-arfid-food-intake-disorder/>,
<https://health.usnews.com/wellness/for-parents/articles/2017-04-03/what-parents-need-to-know-about-extreme-picky-eating>,
<https://jillcastle.com/childhood-nutrition/food-aversion-treatment-arfid/>

- Could you provide a reference to elaborate more on the developmental readiness that you mentioned when discussing appropriate age to introduce solids?

Yes, head to the new 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. They have the B-24 months guidelines and a nice chart to summarize developmental readiness for starting solids. I also cover this in my book, [The Smart Mom's Guide to Starting Solids](#).