AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Committee on Nutrition

Follow-up or Weaning Formulas

A high level of success in infant nutrition has been achieved in the United States by breast-feeding as preferred, or by feeding with iron-fortified infant formulas. Minor controversies about feeding choices occur when infants are weaned from an all-liquid diet to one containing a variety of solid foods.

Weaning is not a single event but a process that takes place throughout a number of months, beginning optimally between 4 and 6 months of age. The nutritional objective is to achieve a varied diet with approximately 35% to 50% of energy coming from sources other than breast milk or infant formula. Variety remains the key to the diet, particularly for infants older than 6 months of age. Solid food must provide an adequate source of iron, trace minerals, and vitamins to replace and supplement those in that portion of breast milk or formula removed from the diet.

Breast milk and fortified infant formula continue to be optimal for the milk segment of the diet during the second 6 months of life. The mother may choose to stop breast-feeding for a variety of reasons, however. The Committee on Nutrition has indicated that cow’s milk could be substituted in the second 6 months of age provided that (1) the amount of milk calories consumed does not exceed 65% of total calories and (2) the solid food portion of the diet replace the iron and vitamins deficient in cow’s milk.

Recently “follow-up” feedings (formulas) have been marketed in the United States as they have been in Europe for many years. Again, such food should provide no more than 50% to 65% of the total calorie intake. The nutrient content is satisfactory in available follow-up formulas. The iron fortification they contain is an advantage for infants receiving inadequate amounts of solid food. Other compositional changes in protein, fat, carbohydrate, sodium, and calcium have no clearly established superiority over currently used feedings for infants at this age. Thus, follow-up formula, although nutritionally adequate, offers no clear advantage for infants receiving sufficient amounts of iron and vitamin-containing solid food.

REFERENCES

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Pediatrics 1989;83;1067

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