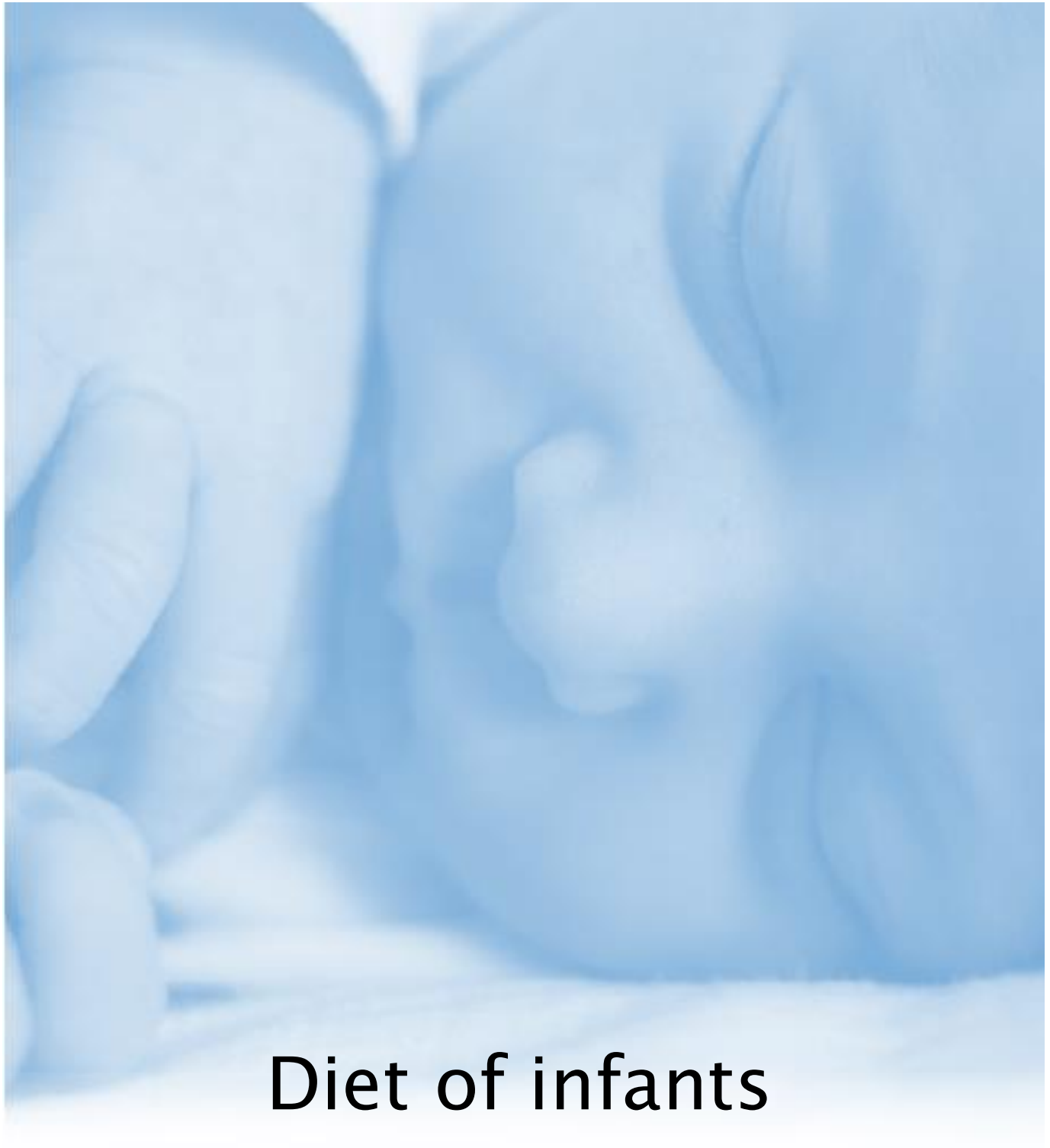




Etelä-Pohjanmaan
sairaanhoitopiiri



Seinäjoki Central Hospital



Diet of infants

Hanneksenrinne 7
60220 Seinäjoki
6041-2019-P

Telephone (switchboard)
06 415 4111

E-mail:
firstname.lastname@epshp.fi



Content of this booklet

The basis of a healthy diet is already established in infancy. Observing and identifying the feelings of hunger and satiety are important factors in the diet of a small infant.

This booklet is designed for babies born healthy and with normal weight. It should not, however, replace personal guidance given by a healthcare professional. Please contact a registered nutritionist (M.Sc.) if you have any questions about nutrition.

Key points

- Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended to all infants under 4–6 months and partial breastfeeding to all children less than one year old.
- Vitamin D preparations are recommended to all infants over two weeks old. The amount of formula and weaning products used must be considered when planning the dose of vitamin D for children less than one year old.
- Solid foods can be added to the baby's diet as small portions that can be tasted in addition to breastfeeding when the baby is four to six months old.
- When the baby is one year old, they can slowly join the family for meals.



Breast milk is the best nutrition for the baby

Breast milk is enough to ensure the baby's adequate intake of energy and nutrients for the first six months, with the exception of vitamin D. In order to ensure the adequate intake of vitamin D, babies need vitamin D preparations all year round from the age of two weeks onwards. The amount of formula, weaning products and gruels and porridges with added vitamin D used must be considered when planning the dose of vitamin D for children less than one year old (Table 1). All one-year-old children must be given 10 µg of vitamin D on a daily basis regardless of their normal diet.

Table 1. Doses of vitamin D for children less than one year old.

| Sources of added vitamin D | Year-round daily dose of vitamin D |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Less than 500 ml of formula, weaning products or gruels or porridges with added vitamin D a day | 10 µg |
| 500–800 ml of formula, weaning products or gruels or porridges with added vitamin D a day | 6 µg |
| More than 800 ml of formula, weaning products or gruels or porridges with added vitamin D a day | 2 µg |

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended until the baby is 4–6 months old. Breast milk supports the development of the baby's immune and intestinal systems and provides protection against inflammations. Many nutrients are also more absorbable from breast milk than from formula.

The baby will feed on breast milk according to their need for nutrients. If the baby is fed on demand, at least 8–12 times a day, the amount of milk will correspond with the baby's needs. The



Seinäjoki Central Hospital

4 (8)

adequacy of breast milk can be assessed according to the baby's condition and secretions. Slow weight gain, small amounts of urine or stool, crying and restlessness can indicate that breast milk is not adequate as an exclusive source of nutrients. If a baby older than four months needs other nutrients in addition to breast milk, solid foods are a better option than formulas. Families can consult a health care professional for support in breastfeeding at maternity hospitals, child health clinics and breastfeeding outpatient clinics.



Breastfeeding should be continued until the baby is one year old, as partial breastfeeding in addition to solid foods supports the development of the baby's intestinal system and tolerance to new foods. Weaning is recommended to be performed in phases, but each family has to make the decision when to stop breastfeeding.



Infant formulas

Formulas are designed for babies who do not get any or enough breast milk. Formulas simulate breast milk and they are designed for infants. Regular cow milk or plant-based milk-like drinks, such as soy or oat drinks, are not suitable options for the diet of a child less than one year old. Formulas are given to the baby on demand, in the same way as breastmilk.

Solid foods

The child is ready to eat solid foods when they can eat sit up with support and control the movement of their head. Solid foods can be offered to the child for tasting when they are at least four months old and not older than six months, considering the child's individual eating capacity.

New foods should be offered when the baby has been fed with breast milk or formula. Babies need to be introduced to new foods slowly, so the same food should be offered multiple times in order to let the child learn to like the new taste.

When the baby is six months old, they need solid foods in addition to breast milk. Continuing exclusive breastfeeding after this can cause zinc, iron and protein deficiency. Delaying the provision of solid foods beyond the age of six months can also increase the child's susceptibility to food allergies.

Diverse diet

It is a good idea to offer the baby small portions of the family's regular meals before any salt is added. You can make the solid foods softer by mixing breast milk, formula or water into them. Ideal first foods to be offered to the baby have mild basic tastes, such as cooked and mashed vegetables, berries and fruit. It is recommended to start tasting grain products, meat, chicken, fish and egg when the child is at least five months old. When the



child is six months old, their iron stores deplete slowly, their need for iron increases and the iron content of breast milk declines. Because of this, meat and grain products should be added to the child's diet when they are 6–10 months old. Tasting fish, egg and grain products should not be delayed even in families with food allergies.

The ideal dairy products to be offered first, when the baby is at least ten months old, include unflavoured sour milk products, such as natural yoghurt. Milk and plant-based drinks are suitable drinks with a meal for the child when they are at least one year old, but they can be already used in cooking when the baby is ten months old.

Table 2. Diet of infants less than one year old.

| Child's age, months | Diet |
|---------------------|--|
| 0-4 | Exclusive breastfeeding on demand: breast milk or formula |
| 4-6 | Taste portions with breastfeeding: vegetables, berries and fruit Sources of iron from the age of five months onwards: grain products, meat, fish, chicken and egg |
| 6-10 | Variety of mashed and finger foods with breastfeeding: vegetables, berries, fruit, grain and meat products |
| 10-12 | All food products used in ground form: vegetables, berries, fruit, grain and meat products, unflavoured sour milk products and milk used in cooking |
| Over 12 | Joining family meals: milk and plant-based drinks |



Ground food

The baby should practise eating and using cutlery on their own from the very start. When the oral motor skills develop and the baby's teeth erupt, ground and solid foods can be offered instead of smooth mashed foods. Ideal finger foods include fresh and cooked vegetables, berries and fruit, ground meat, bread, boiled egg and cottage cheese. These are perfect foods to start practising with.

Foods to be avoided

Certain foods should be avoided until the baby is one year old due to the harmful substances contained by them.

The instructions on the safe use of food items are available on the Finnish Food Authority website: <https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/en/>.



Etelä-Pohjanmaan
sairaanhoitopiiri



Seinäjoki Central Hospital

8 (8)

Text content: Riikka Suorajärvi-Bron, registered nutritionist (M.Sc.)

Sources: Eating together - food recommendations for families with children. THL 2019.

Cover image: Pixabay

Updated: March 2021