

News story: SACN publishes 'Feeding in the first year of life' report

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) has published its report on ['Feeding in the first year of life'](#), providing recommendations on infant feeding from birth up to 12 months of age.

The last review of infant feeding was undertaken by SACN's predecessor Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) in 1994 and formed the basis for government recommendations in the UK.

SACN recommends babies are exclusively breastfed until around 6 months of age and continue to be breastfed for at least the first year of life. Additionally, solid foods should not be introduced until around 6 months to benefit the child's overall health. This represents no change to current government recommendations. SACN concludes breastfeeding makes an important contribution to infant and maternal health. This includes the development of the infant immune system, while not breastfeeding is associated with a higher risk of infant hospital admission for infectious illness.

By around 6 months of age, infants are usually ready to accept foods other than breastmilk or formula. SACN concludes delaying solid foods to around 6 months is not associated with later difficulty in accepting solid foods – the idea of a 'critical window' between 4 and 6 months is not supported by the evidence.

SACN has recommended strengthening advice regarding the introduction of peanuts and hen's egg – advice on complementary feeding should state these foods can be introduced from around 6 months of age and need not be differentiated from other solid foods. The deliberate exclusion of peanuts or hen's egg beyond 6 to 12 months of age may increase the risk of allergy to these foods.

Other recommendations include:

1. Breast milk, infant formula and water should be the only drinks offered between 6 and 12 months of age. Cows' milk should not be given as a main drink, as this is associated with lower iron status.
2. A wide range of solid foods, including foods containing iron, should be introduced from around six months of age, alongside breastfeeding. These foods should have different textures and flavours and may need to be tried several times before the infant accepts them, particularly as they get older.

Breastfed infants up to 12 months should receive a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10µg of vitamin D (340-400 IU/d). Formula-fed infants do

not need a supplement unless consuming less than 500ml of infant formula a day.

SACN raises concerns about the proportion of infants with energy intakes above requirements and the proportion exceeding growth standards for their weight – around three-quarters of infants for both. SACN recommends consideration is given to monitoring the prevalence of overweight and overfeeding in infants, and ways to address high energy intakes in this age group.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at Public Health England (PHE) said:

The SACN report reinforces existing advice on infant feeding in relation to breastfeeding and the introduction of solid foods. In new advice, it provides clear guidance on the introduction of allergenic foods.

SACN's robust advice puts to bed any arguments about a beneficial effect of early introduction of solid foods.

PHE's [Start4Life](#) website provides a range of advice and resources to help parents through pregnancy, birth and parenthood. This includes tips on infant feeding to help give children the best nutritional start in life.