

WATERMELON Sandwiches and WIGGLES



Dakota County Public Health Department • 651-554-6100

Infant Nutrition in Child Care

According to the article, *“The Power of Food”* by Jamie Bonczyk, MA, and Kathryn Costello, MPH, RD: “90% of neural connections are formed by the time a child is five years old. These early years provide the foundation for children’s future health, academic success, and social and emotional well-being. This is the most important time to develop children’s healthy eating habits, and to educate children and families about the role nutrition plays in child development.”

Three important takeaways:

1. The most rapid brain growth occurs during the first year of life. The brain triples in size from birth to the child’s first birthday.
2. During the first year, around fifty percent of an infant's daily calories come from fat.
3. Fats influence brain development and performance in growing infants.

Providers’ Professional Development Video

- “Infant Nutrition in the Child Care Setting”
- Learn more about feeding children with special needs, cues for hunger/fullness, introducing solid foods, healthy feeding environments and choking hazards.
- Watch the [VIDEO](#) here.

[How to support breastfeeding mothers and families](#) using best practices in child care centers. See tips for welcoming families, handling breastmilk and marketing your center as breastfeeding friendly. Make this a natural part of your program. It can also support the health of your kids and staff!

Want to be recognized by the Minnesota Department of Health as a Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Facility? Become a recognized program by following these [steps](#).

Are children in your care starting [solid foods](#)? Understanding cues and helping the children in your care learn this new skill are an important role for providers.

You are laying the foundation for lifelong healthy eating habits

- Makes sure to talk to parents about allergies & intolerances.
- Work with parents to understand the child's hunger and satiety cues and foods that they have been introduced to at home (specific foods, amounts, times and temperatures).
- Click this link to review [infant development, hunger and satiety cues](#) for children birth to 12 months.
- Infants eat every two to four hours or so, but some infants eat more frequently.
- Ask the parent how the baby likes to be held when being fed.
- When introducing solid foods, let the baby use fingers or small spoons.
- Avoid this list of [choking hazards](#).



Food and drinks for six-24 month olds

The number one source of nutrition for infants birth to age one is breastmilk or formula.

Foods introduced at or around six months are called complementary foods. Age six to nine months is a critical time for texture and flavor introduction.

According to the CDC, between children's first and second year, they are developing the skills needed to participate in meals with peers and family. By the time children are two years old they will be able to eat most foods at the table. Find more [foods and drinks that are appropriate for this age](#).

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) also includes information on:

- When, What, and How to Introduce Solid Foods
- How Much and How Often to Feed
- Choking Hazards
- Foods and Drinks to Encourage
- Foods and Drinks to Limit
- Tastes and Textures
- Fortified Cow's Milk and Milk Alternatives
- Picky Eaters
- Food Preparation and Safety

Help infants gain mealtime vocabulary with these [easy-to-learn signs](#)

