

INTRODUCING SOLIDS

Baby-led weaning

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Readiness for solids - how do we know?

- u The book says so
- u Weight gain slows
- u Baby appears hungry
 - u waking at night?
 - u watching parents eating?
- u Everyone else is doing it

Naylor and Morrow, 2001

*reviewed the relevant literature
concerning babies':*

- u Immunological development
- u Gastrointestinal development
- u Oral motor development

Here's another fine mess . . .

What about ...

- u reliable signs of readiness?
- u getting started?
- u the 'window of opportunity'?

The critical period for learning

Illingworth and Lister, 1964

- u The introduction of a specific stimulus at an **appropriate time** permits a milestone of development to occur
- u The critical or sensitive period (for the development of any skill) is intimately related to **maturation**
- u Restriction of **practice** inhibits skill development

The critical period in infant feeding Illingworth and Lister, 1964

- u Babies should be given solid foods shortly **after** they have begun to chew
- u The average age at which a child begins to chew is **6 months**
- u Babies begin to chew shortly **after** they have begun to reach out for objects and get them

Getting started

- u Babies of six months can chew
- u Babies who can chew don't need sloppy food
- u Lack of opportunity to practise chewing may hinder development of this skill

The self-feeding continuum



Self-feeding begins at birth

The self-feeding continuum and the 'introduction' of solids



Signs of readiness

- u 26 weeks ?
- u Developmental clues:
 - u Beginning to sit alone
 - u Able to reach and grab
 - u Taking everything to his mouth
 - u Making consonant sounds

Let the baby lead the way

*(Or: Never mind
the window . . .
what about the
opportunity?)*



What we observed

- u At 4 months, the babies weren't ready to feed themselves
- u At around 6 months, they:
 - u were able to get food into their mouths
 - u were beginning to eat purposefully
 - u liked to explore their food
 - u didn't seem to need teeth

And by 9 months . . .

The babies:

- u were effective self-feeders
- u appeared more dextrous than their peers
- u enjoyed mealtimes – no food refusal
- u liked to choose what to eat, and in what order
- u tended to dislike being spoon-fed
- u were beginning to manage spoons on their own

What the mothers said

- u They all think I'm a bit weird!*
- u She really seems to enjoy eating.*
- u I didn't expect him to be eating raisins.*
- u Everyone's really jealous now!*
- u I'll definitely do this with my next baby.*

Things to consider

- u It can be messy!
- u What about choking?
- u Can bottle-fed babies do this?
- u Ensuring adequate nutrition
- u Parents need to adopt the whole approach

Implementing a self-feeding approach

- u Aim for shared mealtimes
- u Sit the baby up
- u Offer fist-sized pieces
- u Allow play/exploration
- u Continue to breastfeed on demand
- u Let the baby stay in control

It's so much better!

- u No need for pureed foods
- u The whole process is simpler
- u Babies enjoy a wider range of foods
- u Babies' skill development is enhanced
- u All the family can eat together

Is there another way?

*Introduce the baby to
the solids not the solids
(in)to the baby!*