

Dear Celide:

*I am the mother of a four-month old milk-allergic infant. I am nursing my daughter and need information on milk-free sources of calcium. I also need information for introducing solid foods to my baby.*

The calcium requirements for a nursing mother have recently been increased to 1500 milligrams per day (5 eight ounce glasses), which emphasizes the importance of an adequate daily supply of calcium. There are alternative milk products that are enriched with calcium, Vitamin A, and Vitamin D.

Two products I am aware of are Rice Dream Rice Milk and Vance's DariFree, a potato-based product. Both of these beverages supply 300 milligrams of calcium per 8-ounce glass. In addition to the milk alternatives, you can also use the following enriched juices, fruit drinks, and cereals:

- ❖ Tropicana Season's Best Plus Calcium Orange Juice

- ❖ Minute Maid Premium Calcium Enriched Orange Juice
- ❖ Gerber Graduates apple, berry punch, apple grape, fruit punch, and apple banana juices
- ❖ Sunny Delight with Calcium
- ❖ Hawaiian Punch Double C
- ❖ Total Cereal

To meet your daily calcium requirements, you will need to drink 5 eight ounce servings of any of those beverages.

The introduction of solid foods to a food-allergic infant should be delayed until the baby is 6 months of age. Prior to this the infant should receive only breast milk or an FDA-approved hypoallergenic formula.

At 6 months of age, the baby may begin eating baby rice cereal. It should be a single-grain cereal, with no additives such as malt or soy lecithin.

When the baby reaches 7 months of age, you can begin a gradual introduction of vegetables starting with the "orange" vegetables (squash, sweet potatoes, carrots) and then advancing to the "green" ones (spinach, green beans, peas).

If you buy commercially prepared baby food, make sure it includes only vegetables and water and no other additives. Feed each new vegetable for five to seven days before trying a new vegetable. This period of five to seven days is a time for you to observe any signs of intolerance.

If your infant eats the new vegetable with no reaction, then that vegetable can be part of the baby's regular diet. If you think your infant did not tolerate a new vegetable, discuss your findings with the baby's doctor.

At 8 months of age, the baby can begin to eat fruits. Again, if you are

using commercially prepared fruits, make sure they are single fruits made without tapioca or food starch. Like the vegetables, you should feed the new fruit five to seven days before introducing a new one.

There is no specific order for the introduction of fruits, but pineapple and bananas are typically introduced after apples, pears, plums, peaches, and apricots.

When the baby is 9 months of age, you can begin the introduction of other grains and vegetables. Oat may be introduced first, followed by corn, white potato, barley, and wheat. As with all other foods you introduced, be sure you give a single food and feed five to seven days before advancing to the next food.

Between 10 to 12 months the baby can begin to eat other vegetables, legumes, and meats. The order of introduction of

meats typically starts with lamb and then advances to pork, turkey, chicken and beef.

The introduction of highly allergenic foods such as milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish – as well as any reaction to a newly introduced food – should be discussed with your doctor.

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