

Cereal Isn't the Crunchy Thing To Do

Nutrition – Heather Dexter, N.D.

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Talking Points

- ❖ Many parents turn to cereal for a first food. Heather Dexter, ND tells us why these “sacred” foods make a better choice.
- ❖ Sacred foods are high in nutrition and are good for brain development and gut health that are passed down from generation to generation.
- ❖ Did your pediatrician tell you to only feed your baby on a schedule and/or add cereal to your baby’s milk to help them sleep through the night? This may not be the best thing for your child’s health.
- ❖ Feed on demand. When your baby is first born their stomach is the size of a pea. Their stomach needs to slowly stretch out over time to be able to take larger amounts of milk. “Because mama’s milk, in most cases, is so high in nutrients, it absorbs very quickly across the intestinal mucosa, leaving baby soon hungry for more.” (63) Your baby should want to nurse every 30 minutes to two hours. This is normal.
- ❖ Remember how quickly the milk is absorbed by the baby’s stomach? This is why babies will not sleep through the night. Sure, adding cereal to a baby’s milk will make them sleep through the night but do you know why it does?
- ❖ Dexter explains, “Babies do not have the enzymes needed to properly digest grains until between 7 and 10 months of age, or after they get their first few teeth. Therefore, the cereal sits in the stomach and then sits in the intestines, and sits and sits, remaining undigested. Babies feel full with food still in their digestive tract, and so they sleep longer. This is a bad thing. It creates a lot of damage to the brush border of the intestinal tract, increasing the potential for allergies and chronic digestive disorders in early life. Lots of babies receiving cereal experience colic, are constipated, develop eczema, have numerous allergies and more.” (63)
- ❖ Cereals aren’t nutritionally beneficial and can be loaded with “heavy metals, corn syrup, monosodium glutamate, synthetic minerals and additives”. (63) These ingredients cause a buildup of toxins that harm the baby’s sensitive membranes and microbiome in the gut tract.
- ❖ Mothers and babies bond during the nighttime nursing sessions. If a baby is sleeping through the night the motherbaby duo are missing out on this precious bonding time.

- ❖ However, you are the mother and you get to make the decisions that are best for you family. Follow your gut, read the information and make an informed decision.
- ❖ What is the magic age for your little ones to start eating solid foods? Dexter believes it is no earlier than 7 months. Why is this? “At 7 months, the tongue-thrust reflex should be disappearing. Your baby should have good head control, a good fist grasp and a developing pincer grasp. Your baby should be able to sit up unassisted and maybe even crawl. These milestones are very important, as your baby will be feeding himself; he should not be propped up or reclined, because he will be eating nutrient-dense, whole foods.” (63)
- ❖ It may take a few tries to get your baby to eat solid food, on average a baby needs to be exposed to a single food about seven times to accept it. Also, introduce one food at a time and space out the new foods about 5-7 days. This allows the body to digest the foods and be sure there is no food allergen.
- ❖ Here are Dexter’s eight recommended foods (in no particular order):

1. Organic avocado – high in fat, potassium, phosphorous and magnesium
 2. Sweet potato – high in beta carotene, vitamin A and fat
 3. Raw egg yokes (from free roaming, pastured chickens) – an excellent source of numerous vitamins and minerals, including lecithin, choline, protein, cholesterol and fat
 4. Red meat (organic, grass fed) – great source of iron
 5. Liver (organic, grass fed) – iron and meat-based amino acids
 6. Salmon roe (wild) – rich in vitamins A, D and K2, along with zinc, iodine and the brain-building fatty acid DHA
 7. Anchovies and sardines – rich in calcium and other minerals, and vitamins A, D and B12
 8. Bone marrow (organic, grass fed) – vitamins A, K2, and high levels of nourishing fats
- ❖ If you’re going to feed your child cereal, quinoa, amaranth, kamut or millet are your best choices. Feed these to your child no earlier than 15 months.
 - ❖ Here are Dexter’s top 10 foods for baby to avoid: wheat, corn, tofu and soy, nuts, pasteurized cow milk, pasteurized honey, shellfish, dried fruits, strawberries and egg whites.
 - ❖ She suggests avoiding GMOs at all costs as they have never been proven to be safe.

Resources

Full references for each article are available at <http://pathwaystofamilywellness.org/references.html>

Read about Heather Dexter here: <http://likemindedmamas.com/about/heather/>