

## Lesson Plan No Cereal Zone

### Topic

Parents/caregivers of infants 0–6 months of age

### Key Messages

- Breastmilk or Iron-fortified formula is all babies need before the age of six months.
- Infants are not ready to properly digest cereal or other foods until about six months.
- Giving cereal or other solid foods before baby is developmentally ready may cause harm.

### Handouts

- Pictures of babies with different facial expressions being fed (hunger/satiety)
- Optional handout: Caution No-Cereal Zone ([www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com](http://www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com))

### References

- Satter, Ellyn. Child of Mine: Feeding With Love and Good Sense, Bull Publishing, 2000, chapter 7, p.245
- Infant Feeding Handbook, USDA, 2008
- No Cereal Zone Lesson Plan, Pam McCarthy and Associates  
[www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com](http://www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com)

### Evaluation

- Encourage participants to share at least one new thing learned and/or set a personal goal.

# Lesson Plan

## No Cereal Zone

### 1. Group Education

#### Lesson Overview

1. Introduction
2. Developmental signs of readiness for solid foods
3. Hunger and satiety cues
4. Risks of offering solid foods too early
5. Anticipatory guidance when offering solid foods

#### Materials

- Pictures of babies with different facial expressions being fed (hunger/satiety)
- Optional handout: Caution No-Cereal Zone ([www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com](http://www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com))
- Board
- Sticky tack or tape

#### Methods

**OPEN:** Emotion-based counseling starts with provocative questions, activities or stories that lead to emotion-based conversations, not to an immediate transfer of knowledge.

- Introduces self, topic, lesson overview and length of session.
- Think back to the first time your baby twisted his or her tiny hand around your finger. How did you feel about your baby at that moment?

#### Sample responses:

- Protective
  - Proud
  - Overwhelmed
  - Amazed
  - Scared
- Babies communicate with us in amazing ways. From the first moments, babies want parents to know that they trust their parents to care for them.

**DIG:** During the "dig" step, the facilitator asks questions to get the learners to open up, share their memories and experiences and get closer to the topic.

## Lesson Plan No Cereal Zone

- What have you heard from friends, family, or your doctor about feeding your baby?

### Sample responses:

- Feeding baby cereal helps babies sleep at night
  - Cereal stops babies from crying
  - Breastmilk or formula is not enough
  - Babies need solid food to grow big and strong
  - Starting foods too soon may cause allergies or overeating
  - Starting foods too soon may make baby too big
- What do you think of that advice?
- What were the experiences they shared about feeding their baby's cereal or solid foods before six months?

### Sample responses:

- They fed all their children cereal at a very early age and they survived
- Their babies slept through the night

**CONNECT:** During the "connect" step, parents connect the conversation topic with their values, attitudes, beliefs and feelings. The facilitator helps parents reflect on their personal needs and wants and connects them to the health-related behaviors being suggested.

- Years ago, parents were advised by family, friends and doctor's to feed infants solids early for many different reasons—and yes most did survive! However, now we know more about feeding babies', the risks of feeding too early and the signs that a baby is ready for solids. Let's talk more about what we know today about babies...

### **Developmental signs of readiness for solid foods**

- What signs do our babies give us when they are ready for solid foods?

### Sample Responses:

- Sit up, alone or with support
- Hold head steady and straight
- Open his mouth when he sees food coming
- Keep his tongue low and flat when offered the spoon
- Close his lips over a spoon and scrape food off as a spoon is removed from his mouth
- Keep food in mouth and swallow

## Lesson Plan No Cereal Zone

These are all signs that your baby is mature enough to begin learning to eat from a spoon.

### **Hunger and satiety cues**

- Show participants the different pictures of babies being fed.
- What are these babies saying to us?

#### Sample Responses:

“I’m hungry” : Cries, fusses; smiles, gazes at caregiver or coos during feeding to indicate wanting more; moves head toward spoon or tries to swipe food towards mouth.

“I’m full”: eating slows down, pushes food away, spits out nipple, turns head away, more distracted

- How can we as parents know what to feed our babies when faced with so much different information and advice?

#### Sample Responses:

- Pay attention to your baby
- Watch for signs of when your baby is ready to start eating cereal
- Recognize when your baby is hungry and full
- Ask your doctor, nurse or WIC Nutritionist

### **Risks of offering solid foods too early**

- As parents who love their babies, we want to make a choice that is the best for them. Babies trust parents to do what is right for them.
- What do you think could happen if infants are fed solids foods before they are developmentally ready?

#### Sample responses:

- Choke on food
- Develop allergies
- Become overweight or have other health problems
- Not drink enough breastmilk or formula

Doctor’s now know that breastmilk or formula provides all the nutrients and calories your baby needs the first six months of life.

*Reinforce Key Messages.*

## Lesson Plan No Cereal Zone

### Anticipatory Guidance – Introducing Solid Foods

- You will receive cereal and jars of baby food fruits and vegetables at 6 months of age. Cereal should be offered first, because it is easier for your baby to digest. Plain rice cereal can be offered with a spoon for 7 days before any other cereal is given. Then, oatmeal and then barley cereal can be offered. It is always best to offer one new food at a time to make sure your baby doesn't have an allergic reaction to it.
- After your baby has mastered cereal you can offer jars of vegetables and fruits. Again, always offer one new food at a time and wait 7 days to make sure your baby doesn't have an allergic reaction to it.

**ACT:** During this “step” the facilitator helps the participants identify specific action steps and build confidence to help them be the parent they want to be.

- How do you handle when friends or family promote early feeding of cereal while others assure you that breastmilk and /or iron fortified formula are all your baby needs for the first 6 months?

#### Sample Responses:

- Thank them for their support and love
  - Tell them how your baby will show you he is ready for solids
  - Show them what your baby does when she is hungry or full
  - Assure them that your baby can trust you to do what is best for him
- What will you do to make sure your baby does not receive solid foods too early?
- Encourage participants to share at least one new thing learned and/or set a personal goal.



