

Beef as a First Food

Beginning around 6 months of age, infants are at risk of falling short of certain key nutrients for growth, especially infants who are exclusively breastfed. The transition from exclusive breastfeeding or formula feeding to the addition of solid foods, is referred to as complementary feeding. The introduction of complementary foods, that is, foods other than breast milk or infant formula, serves an important purpose in the daily diets of infants.¹⁻³ Complementary foods can take form as single-grain infant cereal, vegetables, fruits, and meats, and are modified to an appropriate texture (e.g., strained, pureed, chopped, etc.) for the infant's developmental readiness.

Authoritative guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the introduction of complementary foods at approximately 6 months of age, based on the infant's developmental stage and nutritional status, even though breastfeeding may continue beyond two years.¹⁻³ These complementary foods are essential to ensuring adequate nutrition during this key window of opportunity in infant development to prevent undernutrition or malnutrition and subsequent long-term adverse consequences. Meat as a complementary food promotes optimal growth and helps to prevent micronutrient deficiency, especially with regards to iron and zinc, in breastfed infants.



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