

Recommendation of the National Nutrition Commission

Work group:

Infants, breastfeeding mothers and pregnant women

Quality criteria for solid food starter products

Resolved in the plenary session on 3/11/2016

Unanimous adoption

Quality criteria for solid food products that are best suited for starting babies on solid food

Introduction / Background

In the course of the evaluations of solid food product labelling carried out by the “Healthy eating from the start!” (“Richtig essen von Anfang an!”) health promotion programme, it became apparent that the solid food products currently available on the market do indeed comply with legislation; however, many did not correspond to the Austrian Solid Food Recommendations (Österreichische Beikostempfehlungen) and therefore require improvement with respect to their nutritional quality. Many products contained ingredients such as sugar, honey, chocolate, various syrups, juice concentrates, maltodextrin and salt, which are not recommended for consumption in the first year. Solid food products that contain milk and/or milk products are also being sold for infants below the recommended age.

Improving the quality of baby food products – particularly with respect to the sugar and salt content – is one of the most important steps in offering parents and close caregivers a healthy product range for their children. We thereby hope to promote responsible personal nutrition by parents/caregivers in a sustained manner.

Objective

To create a range of healthy food products for nursing infants who are beginning to consume solid food¹.

Criteria

The “Healthy eating from the start!” health promotion programme has created criteria for optimally suited solid food products suitable from the start of the 5th month and the start of the 6th month.

The Austrian Solid Food Recommendations and the evaluations of solid food product labelling carried out by “Healthy eating from the start!” formed the basis of the criteria.

¹ Solid food refers to all foods and fluids (except for mother's milk, infant formula, and follow-on formula) that an infant receives during the first year.

The compiled criteria are limited to the fields of “suitability by age”, “list of ingredients”, and “recommendation for use”:

Suitability by age

Criteria	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puréed foods that are suitable from starting to introduce solid foods bear the unified age designation “from the 5th month” instead of “after the 4th month”. • Products that are suitable for infants from the 6th month bear the unified designation “from the 6th month”. 	<p>At both national and international level, it is recommended that the solid food should not be introduced before the start of the 5th month (17th week) or after the end of the 6th month (26th week), depending on the child’s developmental stage. To compare solid food products to this recommendation, the indicated age for products that are suitable from the introduction of solid food should bear the unified designation “from the 5th month”.</p> <p>Very clear time indications are important in allowing the consumer to implement recommendations properly. Indications such as “after the 4th month” could, for example, be understood as “in the 4th month” though “from the 5th month” was intended.</p>

Ingredients

Criteria	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following ingredients are <u>not</u> included in purées with the age designations “from the 5th month” and “from the 6th month”: <p>Sugar and sweetening ingredients² such as saccharose, types of sugar (such as glucose syrup, maltodextrin, dextrose, maltose, fructose, lactose (except for in infant formula as per legislation), fruit sweeteners), honey, thickened syrup (such as apple syrup, pear syrup), syrup (such as caramel sugar syrup, rice syrup, barley malt extract/malt syrup), concentrated juice (such as grape, lemon, or pear concentrate), chocolate, biscuits, fruit powder, fruit flakes, dried fruit, sweet whey powder, etc.</p>	<p>According to the Austrian Solid Food Recommendations, sugar and foods that contain sugar are not suitable foods for infants due to the risk of tooth decay and early habituation to the sweet taste.</p>

² Or ingredients that contribute to the sugar content.

Criteria	Rationale
<p>Seasoning and flavouring ingredients such as cooking salt, hot spices (e.g. pepper), cinnamon, flavourings (e.g. natural fruit extracts, vanilla extract, vanillin), chocolate, cocoa products, etc.</p>	<p>To give children who have recently begun eating their first solid foods the opportunity to get to know the natural taste of foods and become accustomed to them, it is better for purees to be made without spices or flavouring ingredients.</p> <p>With regards to salt, studies show that a high sodium intake through nutrition can increase the blood pressure of new-borns and infants and that eating salty food in early childhood can lead to a lasting preference for this taste. To prevent raised blood pressure and keep the threshold value for saltiness at a low level, baby food – in accordance with the Austrian Solid Food Recommendations – should not contain any added salt. Hot spices such as pepper should also be avoided in food for infants.</p>
<p>Processed meats such as sausage, bacon, etc.</p>	<p>Processed meats (such as sausage, bacon, etc.) are among the foods not recommended as weaning foods by the Austrian Solid Food Recommendations as they have a high salt content and contain nitrates/nitrites.</p>
<p>Fruit juices and fruit juices from concentrates</p>	<p>Fruit in its natural form is preferred to fruit juices or fruit juices from concentrates. In fresh fruits, the levels of certain ingredients (such as fibre) are higher than in juice.</p>
<p>All milks and milk products (from cow milk and other animal milks) (with the exception of butter) such as whole milk, fat-free/skimmed milk, cream, whipping cream, yoghurt, curdled milk, buttermilk, milk products, cheese (e.g. hard cheese, mozzarella, curd cheese) long lasting milk products (e.g. milk protein, skimmed milk powder), etc.</p> <p><u>Exceptions:</u> Milk-grains-porridges can contain cow milk (e.g. whole milk), buttermilk, curdled milk,</p>	<p>According to the Austrian Solid Food Recommendations, no cow milk should be given to infants until the sixth month. Currently available studies indicate that infants have an increased risk of developing iron deficiency anaemia and iron deficiency conditions if cow milk was consumed before the 6th month.</p> <p>From the start of the 6th month, cow milk</p>

Criteria	Rationale
and yoghurt ³ as an ingredient (in quantities of no more than 100 ml or 100 g per portion) from the start of the 6th month.	can be used in preparing a porridge of milk and grains. However, the baby should not be fed a porridge containing cow milk (starting with 100ml of cow milk from the 6th month, slowly increasing with age to a maximum of 200ml in the first year) more than once a day. Instead of cow milk, the porridge of milk and grains can also be prepared with plain yogurt, buttermilk, or curdled milk. Curd cheeses and other cheeses, as well as sweetened milk products (such as puddings) are not suitable for babies in the first year.

Recommendations for use for grain porridge mixes

Criteria	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The label does not contain any preparation instructions or any indication regarding the use of milk and milk products (with the exception of whole milk, buttermilk, curdled milk, and yoghurt made from cow milk from the 6th month), sugar, sweetening ingredients, seasoning or flavouring ingredients, processed meats, tea and juice. 	<p>Rationale: see above, below “Ingredients”</p> <p>Infants should only be given herbal tea when needed and under the instructions of a doctor.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If whole milk, buttermilk, curdled milk, or yoghurt are listed as possible preparation methods from the start of the 6th month of life, it must be noted at the only 100ml or 100g of the milk/milk product should be used to begin with, and the quantity slowly increased to a maximum of 200ml or 200g per day in the second six months of life. 	<p>Rationale: see above, below “Ingredients”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grain porridge mixes do not contain preparation recommendations for use as drinking porridges in milk baby bottles. 	<p>Porridges should not be drunk from baby bottles. Drinkable porridges may have high caloric content and pose a risk of overfeeding. Feeding carbohydrate-rich meals from baby bottles can also increase</p>

³ Boil grains in water and then soak well at lower temperatures (or use residual heat). Then stir in buttermilk, curdled milk, or yogurt.

Criteria	Rationale
	the risk of front tooth teeth decay.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For grain porridges that do not contain milk and porridges that only contain 100ml or 100g of the milk and milk products named above, it can be indicated that high quality plant oils (such as flax, canola, walnut, soy, wheat germ, and olive oils) can be added if the porridge is given as a main meal (breakfast, lunch, or dinner). Grain porridges that are prepared with 200ml of mother's milk, formula, or whole milk (alternatively: curdled milk, buttermilk, or yoghurt) do not indicate adding oil. 	<p>For grain porridges without milk or half-milk porridges, it may be necessary to add oil or fat to obtain sufficient caloric density. High quality oils with a high unsaturated fatty acid content (such as flax, canola, walnut, soy, wheat germ, and olive oil) are preferable.</p> <p>For porridges of milk and grain with 200ml of milk, it is not generally necessary to add oil or fat as these porridges generally have sufficient caloric density.</p> <p>Adding fat or oil to porridges that are exclusively intended as snacks is not necessary.</p>

Scope

The criteria apply to all porridges in bottles and for cereal porridges intended to have ingredients stirred in with the age designations “from the 5th month” and “from the 6th month”.

They do not apply to teas, juices, biscuits, waffles made of millet/corn/rice, porridges of milk and grain for stirring (with water), purees in pouches and soups.