

# Guidelines for Complementary Feeding of Infants in the Asia Pacific Region: APACPH Public Health Nutrition Group

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Colin Binns, MBBS, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Mi Kyung Lee, PhD<sup>2</sup>,  
Wah Yun Low, PhD<sup>3</sup>, Philip Baker, BSc, PhD<sup>4</sup>,  
Awang Bulgiba, MPH, PhD<sup>3</sup>, Maznah Dahlui, MPH, PhD<sup>3</sup>,  
Doan Thi Thuy Duong, MPH<sup>5</sup>, Georgia Guldan, PhD<sup>6</sup>,  
Noran Hairi, MPH, PhD<sup>3</sup>, Tomiko Hokama, MD, PhD<sup>7</sup>,  
Masaharu Kagawa, PhD<sup>8</sup>, Indika Karunathilake, MBBS, FRCP<sup>9</sup>,  
Hazreen Abdul Majid, MSc, PhD<sup>3</sup>, Bruce Maycock, PhD, MEd<sup>10</sup>,  
Keiko Nanishi, MD, PhD, IBCLC<sup>11</sup>, Liqian Qiu, MD, PhD<sup>12</sup>,  
Raheema Abdul Raheem, MPH, PhD<sup>13</sup>, Jane Scott, MPH, PhD<sup>1</sup>,  
and Li Tang, MSc, PhD<sup>14</sup>

## Abstract

Good nutrition in the first “1000 days,” including breastfeeding and appropriate complementary foods, prepares for a healthy childhood and adult life, also contributes to the prevention of the double burden of malnutrition. Exclusive breastfeeding provides all required nutrients until an infant is around 6 months of age when complementary foods are needed. A literature review was undertaken of complementary foods in the Asia Pacific region. The foods being used at present are often of low nutrient density may provide insufficient amounts of some critical nutrients, and generally the variety is limited. Guidelines for complementary feeding are provided to assist in education and in public health planning.

## Keywords

complementary feeding, infant, exclusive breastfeeding, Asia Pacific, food variety, nutrients

## What We Already Know

- The first 1000 days, from conception, are a critical period for nutrition and development and establishing a life pattern of health.
- The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months for optimum health.
- At 6 months of age, infants require additional foods to meet their nutritional needs.

## What This Article Adds

- Infants need complementary foods at around 6 months of age. Breastfeeding should continue while foods are introduced and for as long as the mother and infant desire (2 years plus).
- Complementary foods need to be selected carefully, preferably from locally available foods, to provide all of the required nutrients. A variety of foods is more

likely to provide all required nutrients, and variety may protect against allergies.

- Monitoring of growth is important.

## Introduction

Infant and young child nutrition is one of the most important factors in determining current health and the future trajectory of growth and disease patterns later in life. The Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) includes membership from the teaching and research institutes and individuals in our region. It previously published guidance on public health nutrition for infants and adults for academic teaching and public health policy development.<sup>1,2</sup> The APACPH guidelines recommend the introduction of complementary foods at around 6 months of age to provide the additional nutrients and energy and food variety needed by the growing infant.<sup>1</sup> The complementary feeding period (6–24 months) provides an opportunity to