

Practice Point

Timing of introduction of allergenic solids for infants at high risk

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Food allergy affects an estimated 2 to 10% of the population, with evidence of increasing prevalence over time. Preventing food allergy has become an important public health goal. Health Canada currently recommends breastfeeding infants exclusively until they are 6 months old, while acknowledging that in individual practice, signs of infant readiness may guide the introduction of complementary foods a few weeks earlier. There is emerging evidence that early food introduction, between 4 and 6 months of age, may have a role in preventing food allergy, particularly for egg and peanut, in high-risk infants. For infants at high risk for allergic disease, it is now recommended that commonly allergenic solids be introduced at around 6 months of age, but not before 4 months of age, and guided by the infant's developmental readiness for food. Continued breastfeeding should be encouraged and supported because of its many health benefits.

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