



Feeding an Infant – A Kenyan Working Mother

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A Kenyan working mum leaves the house shortly before dawn and comes back just before the sun set on a good day. Feeding her little ones can pose a challenge given her absence from home due to work. It is therefore incumbent upon her to find an able child minder who will assist in the little one's feeding.

Children between the ages of 6 and 23 months need to be provided for a variety of nutritious foods. Between 6 and 12 months, the foods given should allow the infant to learn how to chew.

At 12 months, they should be fully incorporated into the family diet. Meals offered should be of different taste, texture and colour as per the Kenya national clinical nutrition and dietetics reference manual.

How much should an infant consume?

Let your child decide how much to eat from the meals you offer. Do not force your child to eat or restrict the amount of food you allow them to eat. Some days the child might consume more while other days they might consume less. An infant's appetite can change from day to day and it is worse during convalescence.

What to give my infant

Make use of the sample meals below as general guidelines. Plan the child's meals and snacks around the same time each day.

Age	Texture	Frequency	Amount of food an average child will consume in each meal
6 - 8 months	Start with thick porridge, well mashed food and continue with mashed family foods	2 - 3 meals per day plus frequent breast feeds, Depending on the child's appetite, 1 - 2 snacks may be offered	Start with 2 - 3 tablespoons per feed increasing gradually to ½ of a 250 ml cup
9 - 11 months	Finely chopped or mashed foods and foods that baby can pick up	3 - 4 meals plus breastfeeds. Depending on the child's appetite, 1 - 2 snacks may be offered	½ of a 250 ml cup or bowl
12 - 23 months	Family foods, chopped or mashed if necessary	Depending on the child's appetite, 1 - 2 snacks may be offered	¾ to one 250 ml cup/bowl

Table 1

Source: WHO/UNICEF (2006), Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling Guide.

Sample Menu 1 (6 - 12 months)

Breakfast	Thick maize flour porridge enriched with vegetable oil
Morning snack	Yoghurt
Lunch	Potatoes with peas and carrots
Afternoon snack	Mango and pawpaw fresh juice
Dinner	Ugali with liver and spinach
Bed time snack	Infant formula or breastmilk

Table 2

Sample Menu 2 (12 - 23 months)

Breakfast	Pancakes with fruit juice
Morning snack	Cornflakes with milk
Lunch	Rice with beans and cabbage
Afternoon snack	Millet porridge with nuts
Dinner	Arrowroots with pumpkin and minced meat
Bed time snack	1 glass of cow milk (whole)

Table 3

Execution guide

A Kenyan working mum should schedule to prepare the infant's food at dinner time or early morning before leaving the house. All the meals and snacks to be consumed throughout the day should be prepared, portioned and separated accordingly. Make use of Infant's-sized plates, bowls, cups, forks and spoons. An easy to understand meal schedule should be well displayed in the kitchen as a care giver's guide. Constant reminders should be made to the care giver so that the infant can be fed on set intervals. The mother should supervise feeding time often in order to assess progress.

Is there anything I shouldn't feed my toddler?

To avoid choking, meals such as whole grapes; chunks of meats, poultry, bony fish, sausages, nuts, seeds, popcorn, chips, chapati, raw carrots, cucumber, and raisins should be diced into small pieces and supervise the child while feeding.

A child may have some food allergies, the most common food allergens are milk, eggs, nuts, soybeans, wheat and meat. If the culprit food is known, it should be omitted from the infant's diet. It is also essential to talk to a doctor on the same.

Take home for the Kenyan working mum

It is normal to be anxious while away from home regarding your infant's feeding by a third party. Constant communication

with the care giver and the child is encouraged to generate more confidence. Whenever possible, communicate with the caregiver. Find out if the child has been fed, how they ate and how much food was consumed. It is therefore possible to ensure good nutrition for the infants and engage in income generating activities away from home.

Ultimately, the infants will achieve desired nutritional goals owing to the efforts put in place by a working mum.

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