

Ask Dr. Beard:

Frequently Asked Questions On Feeding Your Baby

(NAPSA)—As a practicing pediatrician, I am frequently asked questions about infant nutrition, including recent advances in infant formula and the need to supplement formula or breast milk with additional vitamins and minerals. Following are answers to some of the most common questions parents are asking today about their baby's nutritional needs.

What are DHA and ARA, and do I need them in my baby's formula?

DHA and ARA are two fatty acids found naturally in breast milk. They are important building blocks for the development of eye and brain tissue, and they are passed along to a baby during pregnancy and breast feeding. Recently, formula companies have added DHA and ARA to formula.

If you cannot or choose not to breast feed, you can feel good knowing that these ingredients are authorized for use by the FDA, and, according to some recent studies, are linked with improved brain and visual development when present in formula at recommended levels. Nestlé Good Start Supreme DHA & ARA contains one of the highest levels of DHA and ARA available in the United States and includes a unique benefit called Comfort Proteins for easy digestion.

Does my baby need a vitamin D supplement?

In the past few years, medical professionals have noted a worrisome rise in cases of rickets, a disease of the bones resulting from a vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D is present in certain foods and the



body can make its own vitamin D from sunlight exposure. However, because it is hard to determine if a baby is getting enough exposure to the sun and the fact that exposure to the sun may increase the risk for skin cancer later in life, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends vitamin D drops for breastfed infants who are not receiving formula.

While breast milk is the gold standard in infant nutrition and provides developing babies the nutrients they need, breastfeeding moms who are concerned about whether their babies are getting enough vitamin D to prevent rickets should talk to their pediatricians about vitamin D supplements. Babies receiving at least one pint (16 oz.) of infant formula per day do not need additional supplementation, as all infant formulas sold in the United States are fortified with vitamin D.

If my baby has trouble digesting her formula, should I switch to soy?

Many babies show signs of for-

mula intolerance, such as spitting up, but it is not necessarily a sign of lactose intolerance. In fact, it is sometimes a sign of protein intolerance, meaning that the baby is simply having a difficult time tolerating the whole protein in most formulas. One option is to look for a formula containing 100 percent whey protein that is broken down into smaller pieces, called Comfort Proteins, which are easy to digest. If your baby still has troubles, talk with your doctor before switching your baby to soy.

Does iron-fortified formula cause digestive upset in babies?

After much research, concerns about a possible link between iron in formula and digestive discomfort in infants have been laid to rest. This is good news, because "low-iron" formulas simply don't supply enough iron to maintain proper blood cell counts and hemoglobin, both of which are vital to growth and development. When choosing an infant formula, select one labeled as "iron fortified."

For more expert advice on pregnancy, infant care and nutrition, or if you have additional questions, visit www.verybestbaby.com, or call 1-800-326-4286.

About Dr. Beard: Lillian M. Beard, M.D., a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, is an associate clinical professor at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Washington, D.C. A practicing pediatrician, she is a frequent guest expert and spokesperson on national television programs, discussing issues related to children's health.