

Touching Hearts Touching Minds Handout #1 No Cereal Zone (Infant Feeding 0-6 Months) Counseling Tool

What is the key message?

- Breastmilk or iron-fortified formula is all that babies need before the age of six months.
- Infants' developing bodies are not ready to properly digest cereal or other foods until about six months of age.
- Giving cereal or other solid foods before an infant is developmentally ready may cause harm.

Who should receive this message?

- Pregnant women in their final months before delivery.
- Parents of newborns.
- Parents from cultural groups that promote early feeding of cereal and solid foods to infants.
- Parents who are sleep-deprived and may be seeking ways to encourage their child to sleep through the night.
- Anyone who asks what to feed a child in the first six months of life.

How can this message be used?

Open:

- Think back to the first time your baby twisted her tiny hand around your finger. How did you feel about your baby at that moment? Sample responses:
 - Protective
 - Proud
 - Overwhelmed
 - Amazed
 - Scared
- Babies communicate with parents in amazing ways. From the first moments, babies want parents to know that they trust their parents to care for them.



Dig:

- Has anyone received advice from friends or relatives on when or how to feed cereal to babies? What have they suggested? Sample responses:
 - Feed cereal early so baby sleeps through the night.
 - Feeding cereal will prevent baby from crying.
- What was the experience of your parents when they fed their own babies cereal or solid food before six months? Sample responses:
 - They fed all their children cereal at a very early age and they survived.
 - They know babies and they know that cereal helps babies sleep through the night.
- What have you heard about feeding solid foods - like cereal - to babies younger than six months? Sample responses:
 - Cereal helps babies sleep through the night.
 - Babies need solid food to grow.
 - Breastmilk or formula isn't enough, especially if the baby is bigger.
 - Giving solids too early isn't good for a baby (because of allergies, overeating, etc.)

Connect:

- Babies trust parents to do what is right for them. They say this with wrapped fingers and expectant eyes.
- How can parents know what to feed their babies when faced with conflicting information? How do you decide what to do when grandparents promote early feeding of cereal while others assure you that breastmilk and/or iron-fortified formula are all your baby needs for the first six months?
- How would you feel if you could do something today that could help prevent some things that children struggle with as they get older (like allergies or overweight?)
- How would you feel if you decided to follow current medical advice and charted your own course that may be different from your family or friends?

Act:

- How can you show respect and love to caring relatives and grandparents, yet protect your child from being fed cereal before their body is ready for it?
- What will you do to protect your child from being given cereal before their body is developmentally ready for it?

