



Pondering the Pouch? Tips for Making the Most of Baby Food Pouches

Pouches of pureed fruits and vegetables are taking up more shelf space at the grocery store. Before opening, they do not require refrigeration, which makes it easier to offer young children wholesome food on the go. Infants and toddlers can often eat pouches without help or making a mess. So, are there any downsides to giving young children pouches?

Twisting the cap off one of these pouches reveals a tube that looks like a straw. To eat, children just need to put the straw in their mouth and squeeze the pouch. This does not require any sucking. The sucking action helps develop muscles in the jaw, tongue, and lips. This is important for feeding development and speech. This also promotes proper facial and jaw growth. Pouches are OK every now and then. But to help develop muscles, focus on using a spoon to serve pureed foods. Consider squeezing the contents of the pouch onto a spoon and serving to your little one. Breastfeeding, bottle feeding, and using a straw for beverages also helps facial muscles develop.

Pouches often hide the sights and scents of food. Learning to eat solid foods is a sensory experience. Children benefit from seeing, smelling, feeling, tasting, and playing with food. Serving from a spoon allows children to excite some of their senses.

Nutritionally, pouches provide proper nutrients for children. But pouches can have more sugar. Sugar masks the flavors of more bitter vegetables but also increases the risk of cavities. When shopping for baby food, look for ones lower in sugar. Fruits and vegetables packaged by themselves rather than a mixture tend to have less sugar.

Pouches are typically more expensive than jarred baby food. To save food money, consider buying jarred or making your own baby food for everyday use and save the pouch for when you really need it.

Food safety is important whether you buy the pouch, the jar, or make your own. Putting the baby food in a dish before serving prevents the transfer of bacteria and allows you to safely store the leftovers in the original container. Dispose of any leftovers in the dish.

Pouches are a convenient, less messy, shelf-stable item you can easily take on the go. You can include them with a variety of other wholesome foods. Allowing young children to experience the sights, smells, tastes, and texture of all foods will support proper motor skill development and healthy habits for later in life.

References

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