

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government policies for feeding in the first year of life - adoption of SACN recommendations

**Date of Expiry / Review**  
For information only

**For Action by:**  
NHS Chairs  
NHS Chief Executives  
Directors of Nursing  
Royal College of Nursing  
Royal College of Midwives  
Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health  
Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
Royal College of General Practitioners  
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Directors of Therapies and Healthcare Science

**Action required by:**  
N/A

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**Enclosure(s):** None

## **SACN Report on Feeding in the First Year of Life**

This Welsh Health Circular is to inform you that following the publication of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's (SACNs) report on '*Feeding in the first year of life*' on 17 July 2018 the Welsh Government has adopted their recommendations. The report can be found via the attached link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/feeding-in-the-first-year-of-life-sacn-report>

SACN's conclusions support existing advice on infant feeding, introduction of solid foods (weaning/ complementary feeding) and diversification of the infant diet.

### **Key recommendations**

#### **Breastfeeding**

SACN concluded that breastfeeding makes an important contribution to infant and maternal health and recommends retaining existing advice for women to exclusively breastfeed for around the first 6 months of life and to continue breastfeeding for at least the first year of life once solid foods have been introduced.

The proportion of women who breastfed exclusively to 6 months of age or who were still breastfeeding at 1 year remained very low in 2010 compared with other high income countries. More focus should be given to supporting women to make the choice to breastfeed as increasing the numbers of women who breastfeed past 6 months would bring added health benefits.

#### **Introduction of complementary feeding**

SACN recommends that advice on the age of introduction of solid foods should remain unchanged. That is, most infants should not start solid foods until around the age of 6 months, having achieved developmental readiness.

SACN has recommended strengthening advice regarding the introduction of peanuts and hen's egg – advice on complementary feeding should state these foods can be introduced from around 6 months of age and need not be differentiated from other solid foods. The deliberate exclusion of peanuts or hen's egg beyond 6 to 12 months of age may increase the risk of allergy to these foods.

Other recommendations include:

- breast milk, infant formula and water should be the only drinks offered between 6 and 12 months of age - cows' milk should not be given as a main drink, as this is associated with lower iron status
- a wide range of solid foods, including foods containing iron, should be introduced from around 6 months of age, alongside breastfeeding - these foods should have different textures and flavours and may need to be tried several times before the infant accepts them, particularly as they get older
- breastfed infants up to 12 months should receive a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10µg of vitamin D (340-400 IU/d) - formula-fed infants do not need a supplement unless consuming less than 500ml of infant formula a day

SACN raises concerns about the proportion of infants with energy intakes above requirements and the proportion exceeding growth standards for their weight – around three quarters of infants for both. SACN recommends consideration is given to monitoring the prevalence of overweight and overfeeding in infants, and ways to address high energy intakes in this age group.

### **Next steps**

The Welsh Government and Public Health Wales (PHW) will update guidance as appropriate. Welsh Government is currently developing a breastfeeding action plan to support increasing breastfeeding initiation and sustain breastfeeding practice.