

## Recent Government Report Concerning Baby Foods

February 9, 2021

The North Carolina Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are aware of the report from the U.S. House of Representative's Committee on Oversight and Reform concerning the safety of commercial baby foods. The report – "[Baby Foods are Tainted with Dangerous Levels of Arsenic, Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury](#)" – was made public on February 4, 2021. It presents information and data from several baby food manufacturing companies about heavy metals such as inorganic arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury in their packaged infant and toddler foods. At this time, there have not been any product recalls from manufacturers or the FDA.

The North Carolina CACFP, WIC program, and the National WIC Association support the implementation of the report's recommendations—most of which are aimed at baby food manufacturers—to ensure the optimal health and wellbeing of the nation's youngest children. While the Report focuses on actions that would change industry standards and manufacturing of baby food, there are many ways to support our infants in child care and families with young children **now**. Helping CACFP operators and families select healthy options can help minimize infant and children's heavy metal intake.

Echoing the recommendation of The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), we can support and encourage child care providers and families to do the following:

**Serve a variety of foods.** The CACFP infant meal pattern includes options for a variety of vegetables and fruits, and CACFP operators are encouraged to serve plain, single-component vegetable and fruit baby foods that contain no added ingredients.

**Serve meat/meat alternates in place of infant cereals.** The CACFP infant meal pattern allows child care providers to serve a variety of meat/meat alternates in place of iron-fortified infant cereals at breakfast and lunch/supper. Per the report, some infant rice cereal contained elevated levels of heavy metals, but other foods such as chicken, beans, eggs, yogurt, and much more may be served to developmentally ready infants instead.

**Rotate the types of grains at snack.** Although allowable in the CACFP infant meal pattern, we encourage child care providers to limit intake of processed snacks like puffs, teething biscuits, and infant crackers as they may contain elevated levels of heavy metals. In place of rice cereals, try options like iron-fortified infant oatmeal cereals or whole wheat infant cereals instead.

**Encourage breastfeeding** The CACFP meal patterns support and encourage breastfeeding. Additionally, child care providers can refer participating families to the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program for additional support as needed.

In supporting our families and providers, national advocacy organizations have already issued many statements and resources including:

- [“Heavy Metals in Baby Food”](#) as offered by Healthy Children.org from the American Academy of Pediatrics
- [“Congressional report finds toxins in baby food products”](#) statement from NWA in response to Congressional Report.

As additional information is available, we will share resources and guidance if any action is recommended to support the health and safety of the families we serve.

For questions, please contact the CACFP Nutrition, Training, and Policy team at [CACFPtraining@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:CACFPtraining@dhhs.nc.gov).