

## GUIDANCE FOR USE OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

The health benefits of using nutrition supplements for infants and children are not well studied despite being heavily marketed to improve height, weight, and nutritional status (Lampl 2016). Nutrition supplements, when used with typically developing children, impact weight in the short-term, but do not have a sustained effect on weight. It is generally believed that following an initial burst in calories and improvement in weight, the calories from nutritional supplement begin to *replace* food calories.

The use of nutrition supplements beyond 3-6 months may have unintended consequences on the feeding relationship including increasing behavioral difficulties at meals, food refusal and delayed developmental feeding milestones. Healthcare providers are critical in helping caregivers assess the medical need, evaluate product claims and counsel on developmentally appropriate feeding behaviors.

### **Considerations for appropriate use include:**

#### **Decision to use Nutritional Supplements:**

- When possible, extend the use of infant formulas up until age 2 years of age vs. initiating nutrition supplements at one year of age.
- Before initiating use of these products, identify how the family defines successful eating, growth, and development. Discuss the plan for weaning off the nutritional supplement.
- For children with developmentally appropriate feeding skills, the recommended period of nutrition supplements use is 6 months or less.

#### **Feeding guidance:**

- Offer the beverage while the child is seated at the table and consume along with eating a meal or a snack.
- Nutrition supplements are not to be used as meal replacements or provided between meals.
- Nutrition supplements are not to be sipped on throughout the day.

#### **Oral health:**

- Nutritional supplements are high in sugar. Offer in a small open cup and make available for just 15-30 minutes, during mealtime, to minimize the risk to teeth.
  - Oral hygiene is very important while kids are on oral nutrition supplements.
  - It is not recommended to offer nutrition supplements in bottles or by adding a nipple to the product container.

#### **Discuss a weaning plan before the nutritional supplement is initiated:**

- Offer 4 ounces of nutrition supplement in a cup, during a meal or snack time.
- The beverage should be available for no more than 15-30 minutes.
- After 2-4 months:
  - Week 1: offer 1 ounce of milk mixed with 3 ounces of nutritional supplement
  - Week 2: mix 2 ounces of milk with 2 ounces of nutritional supplement
  - Week 3: mix 3 ounces milk with 1 ounce of nutritional supplement
  - Week 4: offer milk only and discontinue the nutritional supplement