

The First 1,000 Days: Nourishing America's Future

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1,000 DAYS



1,000 Days is the leading non-profit advocacy organization working in the U.S. and around the world to improve nutrition, particularly during the 1,000 day window between a woman's pregnancy and her child's 2nd birthday. We work to promote action and investment in nutrition in order to build a strong foundation for children, their families and their nations to thrive.



The 1,000 days between a woman's pregnancy and her child's 2nd birthday offer a unique window of opportunity to build healthier and more prosperous futures. The right nutrition during these first 1,000 days can have a profound impact on a child's ability to grow, learn and thrive—and a lasting effect on a nation's health and prosperity.

Nutrition in the First 1,000 Days - Why It Matters

Good nutrition during pregnancy and the first years of a child's life provides the essential building blocks for brain development, healthy growth and a strong immune system. In addition, a growing body of scientific research indicates that the foundations for life-long health—including predispositions to obesity and certain chronic diseases—are largely set during this 1,000 day period.

There are three crucial stages in the first 1,000 days: pregnancy, infancy and early childhood. During preg-



THE 10 BUILDING BLOCKS FOR NUTRITION DURING THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS



1 A nutritious diet for mothers during pregnancy



6 A healthy and nutritious diet for babies and toddlers



2 Good care for all mothers during pregnancy



7 Water and other healthy beverages with no added sugars for toddlers



3 Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months



8 The right knowledge and skills for parents and caregivers to properly nourish young children



4 Nurturing, responsive care and feeding of babies and toddlers



9 Consistent access to enough nutritious food for families of young children



5 The right foods introduced to babies at the right times



10 Societal investments in the well-being of every baby and toddler



LINN-JEFF
MOTHER
VIA FACEBOOK

"I felt the greatest joy while breastfeeding my girl. I almost quit trying the first two days at the hospital, it was so hard, but I am so glad I didn't."

nancy, a mother's health and eating habits have a significant impact on the development and future well-being of a child. If a mother's diet is not giving her the nutrients she needs to support a healthy pregnancy and her baby's development or if it is contributing to excessive weight gain—or both—it can have serious, long-term consequences.

From birth through the first year, breastfeeding provides unparalleled brain-building benefits and gives babies the healthiest start to life. Because of the unsurpassed benefits of breastfeeding, the world's leading health agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that babies are fed only breastmilk for their first 6 months, but many mothers lack the support they need to meet this recommendation.

And, finally, beginning at 6 months of age, children should eat a diverse diet of nutrient-rich foods to help fuel their growth and development and shape their taste preferences for healthy foods. Throughout early childhood, parents and other caregivers should also teach healthy eating habits and make sure that water and other non-sugar-sweetened beverages become a consistent part of a child's diet. Deficiencies in key nutrients, poor eating habits and unhealthy weight gain during the early years of a child's life can set the stage for numerous developmental and health problems down the road.

A Look at the First 1,000 Days in the U.S.

Unfortunately, in examining the nutritional health of U.S. infants, toddlers and their families, the data reveal a number of troubling trends. Too many American women enter pregnancy overweight or obese, and too many gain excessive weight while pregnant. This trend, underpinned by uneven access to quality pre-conception and prenatal care in the U.S., is contributing to tragically high levels of maternal death.

In addition, the majority of U.S. babies are not breastfed in accordance with AAP and WHO recommendations, and 1 in 5 babies in America are never breastfed at all. The low rates of breastfeeding in the U.S. are driven by an overall lack of support for mothers to breastfeed, including a lack of access to paid leave.

Regrettably, the diets of U.S. infants and toddlers now mirror the adult American diet—with too few fruits, vegetables and other nutrient-rich foods and too many added sugars and saturated fats. These dietary patterns are putting children's health and development at risk. The data reveal that 25% of U.S. children between one and two years of age do not receive the recommended dietary allowance for iron (a key brain-building nutrient), and that 10% of U.S. children exhibit signs of overweight or obesity before reaching their 2nd birthday.



AMANDA
MOTHER
VIA FACEBOOK

"I'm a military wife with 2 very young children. Without WIC, we would be scrounging to just acquire the basics. WIC is a wonderful program that helps so many... We need to keep WIC going!"

A SNAPSHOT OF THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS IN AMERICA

THE 10 BUILDING BLOCKS FOR NUTRITION

HOW THE U.S. IS FARING



A healthy and nutritious diet for mothers during pregnancy

Nearly half of women gain an excessive amount of weight during pregnancy.



Good care for all mothers during pregnancy

The U.S. has one of the highest maternal mortality rates of any wealthy country in the world.



Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months

Only 22% of infants are exclusively breastfed at 6 months.



Nurturing, responsive care and feeding of babies and toddlers

Less than half of U.S. mothers receive any paid time off to care for their newborn.



The right foods introduced to babies at the right times

Almost 40% of parents introduced solid foods to their babies too early.



A healthy and nutritious diet for babies and toddlers

1 in 4 toddlers are not getting enough iron in their diets—a key nutrient for brain development.



Water and other healthy beverages with no added sugars for toddlers

More than half of toddlers and preschoolers consume one or more sugar-sweetened beverage every day.



The right knowledge and skills for parents and caregivers to properly nourish young children

54% of mothers say they receive mixed messages about what to feed their young children.



Consistent access to enough nutritious food for families of young children

1 in 5 children under the age of 6 live in families that struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table.



Societal investments in the well-being of every baby and toddler

More than 25% of infants and toddlers live in poverty.

While the problem of poor nutrition in the first 1,000 days is pervasive across America, the burden falls hardest on low-income families and communities of color, leading to a concentration of poor health outcomes in these populations. Nearly one in five children under the age of six are part of families who struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table. These children are less likely to thrive and more likely to suffer health problems and developmental delays. Black, Hispanic and other communities of color are most affected by food insecurity, and, as a result, their children are less likely to get a strong start to life. In this way, poor nutrition early in life contributes to deepening disparities and can make a family's climb out of poverty all the more difficult.

The nutrition of all of America's infants and children must be a social and economic imperative. By contributing to a less competitive workforce and higher healthcare costs, the effects of poor child nutrition affect us all. Experts estimate that the health-related costs of food insecurity in America total \$160 billion, more than a third of the U.S. Government's budget deficit.

An Agenda for the Next 1,000 Days

The quality of a child's nutrition is shaped not only by decisions made by his parents and caregivers, but also by broader social and economic factors. For this reason, everyone has an important role to play in ensuring our nation's youngest children get the nutrition they need for a strong start to life. This report identifies a set of 10 "wins" that can have a transformative impact on the first 1,000 days and the future health and well-being of all babies and toddlers in America.

To learn more,
download the full report at:
www.thousanddays.org/resources



KATHY
MOTHER OF 6
MONTH OLD
KENTUCKY

"The first week after payday, the fresh produce goes. The second week we have more processed foods, like spaghetti with canned meat sauce. We'll have more cheap, convenient meals the second week than the first."



10 WINS FOR THE NEXT 1,000 DAYS

1

Empower parents and caregivers with an understanding of the importance of early nutrition and knowledge of best practices for infant and young child feeding.

6

Improve support for mothers to breastfeed by creating breastfeeding-friendly communities, workplaces and healthcare facilities.

2

Educate and train medical and health care professionals, child care workers and others working with expectant mothers, babies and toddlers on the importance of early nutrition and optimal infant and young child feeding practices.

7

Invest in paid parental leave and family-friendly workplace policies to support parents to give their children the strongest start to life.

3

Establish evidence-based dietary guidelines for pregnant women and children under age 2.

8

Encourage companies to follow the World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes which provides guidelines for the ethical marketing and promotion of infant formulas and foods and beverages for young children.

4

Invest in the research, monitoring and surveillance of the nutritional status of pregnant women and children under age 2.

9

Strengthen programs that reach low-income babies, toddlers and their families.

5

Support healthy pregnancies by ensuring access to high quality preconception and prenatal care, nutrition education and obesity prevention programs.

10

Ensure that healthy, nutritious foods are the affordable, available and desired choice for all families.



1020 19TH STREET NW • SUITE 250 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

WWW.THOUSANDDAYS.ORG

[@1000DAYS](https://www.facebook.com/1000days) • [FACEBOOK.COM/1000DAYS](https://www.facebook.com/1000days)

MEDIA@THOUSANDDAYS.ORG

