

The bite-sized guide to healthy weaning



For expert advice and support on making healthy weaning easy,

search **Start4Life**

We're on Facebook and Instagram too and want to hear your weaning tips and stories!

No need to rush from milk to mush. Around six months is right, not four months plus!

It's best to wait until your baby is around six months old before you introduce solid foods alongside breast milk or infant formula. This gives your baby time to develop properly so they can cope with solid food.



Breast milk is the best food your baby can have during the first six months. Babies who are not breastfed are more likely to get infections.

Milk is still important, it gives me the nutrients I need. So don't forget, I'll still want my feed!

Breast milk or infant formula should be your baby's main drink until they are 12 months old, and you can carry on with breast milk for as long as you both want.

TIP: "Follow-on" formula isn't suitable for babies under six months, and you don't need to introduce it after six months.

As time goes on and your baby eats more solids, they may naturally want less breast milk or infant formula. Remember your baby's tummy is tiny and fills up quickly – so offer milk feeds after solids.

What are the signs it's time to wean?

There are three clear signs, which when they appear together from around six months, show that your baby is ready for their first solid foods:

- 1** Sit up & hold their head steady
- 2** Coordinate their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at food, pick it up and put it in their mouth
- 3** Swallow food rather than push it back out

3 signs mistaken for a baby being ready

- 1** Chewing fists
- 2** Waking in the night (more than usual)
- 3** Wanting extra milk feeds

TIP: Starting solid foods will not make them any more likely to sleep through the night. Sometimes a little extra milk will help until they are ready for solids.

Baby not in the mood for food?

It may take 10 tries or even more for your baby to get used to new foods, flavours and textures. There will be days when they eat more, some when they eat less, and then days when they reject everything. Don't worry – it's perfectly normal.

TIP: They might make funny faces, but that doesn't mean they don't like it; they're just getting used to new tastes and textures.

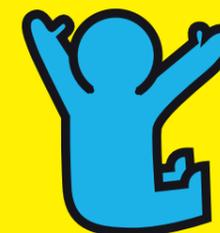
Just keep offering a variety of foods – even the ones they don't seem to like – and let them get used to it in their own time.

Baby has a tiny tummy so will get full quickly, even if it's yummy!

In the beginning your baby will only need a small amount of food each day – so don't worry about how much they eat. The most important thing is trying new foods and flavours and learning to swallow solid food.



They will still be getting most of their energy and nutrients from breast milk or infant formula.



Babies don't need treats, they're already oh so sweet!



Babies don't need sweet or salty snacks or treats. Even baby versions are not necessary. Many shop-bought packaged snacks can be high in sugar and salt.

Avoid things like biscuits, chocolate, sweets and pastries as they have lots of sugar and babies don't need them.

Sweet drinks like squash, fizzy drinks, milkshakes and fruit juice can have lots of sugar, so avoid these to help prevent tooth decay. Even baby and toddler drinks can be sugary.

Offer sips of water from a cup with meals.

An adventure for tiny tummies & taste buds

What do you need?

High chair
Your baby needs to be sitting safely, in an upright position. Never leave them unattended on raised surfaces.

First cup
Encourage your baby to sip water from a cup with their meals. This helps them learn to sip and is better for their teeth.

Soft weaning spoons
These won't hurt your baby's gums.

TIP: Stay with your baby so you can be sure they are swallowing their food safely.

From around **6** months old

TIP: Foods most likely to cause allergies (such as peanuts, eggs, gluten or fish) can be introduced one at a time from around six months along with other solid foods. But remember peanuts should be crushed or ground to avoid choking.

Small amounts still count
Solid food just once a day is enough to get healthy weaning on the way.

Start with single fruit and veg
You can try mashed, pureed or soft cooked sticks (finger foods) of parsnip, potato, yam, sweet potato, carrot, apple or pear.

Variety is the key to keeping baby happy
Gradually increase the amount and variety of food your baby eats and offer foods from the different food groups.

Food groups

Fruit
like bananas, oranges, apples, melon, peach and plums

Pasteurised full fat dairy
like unsweetened yoghurt, fromage frais and cheese

Protein foods
meat (like chicken or lamb), fish, eggs and pulses (like beans and lentils)

Veg
like broccoli, cauliflower, spinach and carrot

Starchy foods
like rice, pasta, noodles, bread, potato and yam

In the mood for lumpy and finger foods
Try moving on (from pureed) to mashed and finger foods as soon as they're ready. Babies love picking up bits of food and feeding themselves – it's good for developing their hand and eye coordination and learning to bite, chew and swallow.

For nutrients and energy I'll still need milk feeds, how much is down to the individual's needs!

TIP: Your baby may gag at first as they are learning how to manage the amount of food they can chew and swallow at one time.

TIP: Include vegetables that aren't so sweet (like broccoli, cauliflower and spinach). This can help prevent babies being fussy eaters as they grow up.

TIP: Babies under 12 months don't need snacks. If they are hungry in between meals offer an extra milk feed.

Keep trying different tastes and textures
Remember, don't give up on foods that they don't seem to like! Keep offering lots of different tastes and textures, including bigger chunks of soft food and a wider variety of finger foods.

Now baby needs three meals a day plus milk feeds!
Lunches and dinners can include a main course and a pudding (like fruit or unsweetened yoghurt).

Around **10-12** months

Munch, chomp, chew, baby learns by watching you
By now, your baby will have had some good practice learning how to eat! Eat together as often as possible; they learn a lot from watching you.

My oh my, new food to try
Around 7-9 months, your baby will gradually move towards three meals a day. Keep increasing the amount and variety of food they eat.

TIP: When your baby has had enough, they'll let you know by firmly closing their mouth or turning their head away.

12 months+



Peek-a-boo! What can I see? Healthy meals for the whole family!
Start4Life has simple recipes for baby that the whole family can enjoy too.
Your baby may need two healthy snacks in between meals (like fruit, vegetable sticks, toast, bread or plain yoghurt).

Milky moo, for baby and you
Your baby can now drink cows' milk. Choose full fat for children under 2 as they need the extra energy.
Carry on breastfeeding for as long as you both want.

Remember, babies copy the things you do, the way that you smile and the things that you chew.

TIP: Babies don't need salt or sugar added to their food (or cooking water). Babies shouldn't eat salty foods as it isn't good for their kidneys. Sugar can cause tooth decay.

Check out our recipes and advice for each weaning stage:

search **Start4Life**

