

Weaning your child

Signs to indicate that your baby is ready to start on solids:

1. Weight gain may be minimal or reducing.
2. Your baby may appear unsatisfied after feeds or may want feeding earlier than usual.
3. Your baby may wake during the night for an extra feed.
4. Your baby can easily be supported in a sitting position.
5. Your baby can hold their head in a stable position.
6. Your baby is putting their fingers in their mouth.



	Early	Mid	Late
Texture	Smooth puree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mashed and soft lumpier foods - Ready - made baby foods, move onto the 7 month jars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chopped up food and finger foods
How much	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin with 1 - 2 teaspoons, gradually increasing the amount when your baby is ready to eat more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Servings can still be small - Meat, fish, eggs or lentils in at least 1 meal per day - Try to offer 2 - 3 servings of starchy foods and 2 servings of fruit and vegetables per day - Include nut spreads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 small servings of meat, fish, eggs or lentils - 3 - 4 small servings of starchy foods and 3 - 4 small servings of fruit and vegetables - Finger food snacks
When to give food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer once a day either during or after a milk feed - Gradually increase the number of times and quantity food is offered 	Before a milk feed, aiming for 3 meals/day	Try to have a regular routine (3 meals a day with small snacks in between if needed)

If baby led weaning is followed, your baby may progress earlier onto soft family foods.

Stage 1 (by 6 months): Smooth textures and tastes

Solids should not be introduced before **4 months of age**. By **6 months of age** your baby should begin weaning to ensure your baby has adequate nutrition. Breast milk and formula milk may no longer meet all your baby's nutritional needs. It is important that introduction to solid foods is no later than 6 months in infants with food allergy or other allergic conditions such as eczema.

By offering a range of foods your baby will learn that foods have different colours, textures, flavours and develop a taste for the foods you introduce.

For example:

On waking	Breast or formula feed
Breakfast	Baby rice mixed with breast, formula milk or cooled boiled water Breast or formula feed
Lunch	Pureed vegetables such as carrot, swede, parsnip, turnip or potato Breast or formula feed
Tea	Fruit puree made from unsweetened stewed fruit such as apple, banana or pear. Mix with baby rice if necessary Breast or formula feed
Bedtime	Breast or formula feed

- Your baby may take time learning how to eat (a week or two)
- Start with a flat plastic baby spoon giving 1-2 teaspoons at each meal. Your baby's solid intake will increase as they learn to manage more
- Do not add solids to bottles (e.g. baby rusks)
- Do not add sugar, honey or salt to any foods, purees or drinks
- At 6 months encourage babies to drink from a beaker or cup

Stage 2: Mealtimes become more important

Move on to mashed soft lumpy textures once your baby is coping well with a variety of flavours and the texture of stage 1. You can use the same foods you are preparing for the rest of the family in the form of mashed, soft and lumpy textures as your baby is developing the ability to chew. This helps develop muscles ready for speech. It is important to provide a varied menu to avoid fussy eating habits.

For example:

On waking	Breast or formula feed
Breakfast	Baby rice or breakfast cereal e.g. Weetabix, Readybrek or porridge mixed with breast, full fat cow's milk or formula milk Mashed or pureed fruit Breast or formula feed
Lunch	Minced meat, poultry, fish, eggs or lentils/pulses, mashed vegetables with mashed potato, rice, or pasta Mashed or pureed fruit with yoghurt Water
Tea	As per lunch Water
Bedtime	Breast or formula feed

- Cow's milk can be used to mix into cereals, sauces and puddings from 6 months
- Use family foods but do not add any sugar, honey or salt
- You can choose to include soft finger foods such as baby corn puffs and wafers
- It is not necessary to flavour water, however if you choose to give it, use no added sugar squash or mix 1 part juice to 10 parts water. Avoid tea, coffee, sweetened and fizzy drinks

Stage 3: Moving on to family foods

Once more lumpy textures are tolerated, move on to chopped and fork mashed family foods and a bigger selection of finger foods. Your baby's ability to chew is developing and will now take a wide variety of foods, eating similar foods to the rest of the family

For example:

Breakfast	Breakfast cereal with whole cow's milk or boiled/scrambled egg or beans on toast Breast or formula feed
Lunch	Family meals such as fish pie, roast dinner, curry and rice, or spaghetti bolognaise with cooked vegetables Chopped fruit or a milky pudding Water
Tea	As per lunch
Bedtime	Breast or formula feed

- Use family foods with less sugar, honey or salt.
- Mild spices can be used for flavour e.g. ground cumin and coriander.
- You can choose to give finger foods such as chopped banana, cheese or cooled cooked carrot or butternut squash either as part of the meal or as a snack
- Include iron rich foods e.g. breakfast cereal, meat, egg, beans and pulses and dark green leafy vegetables
- It is not necessary to flavour water, however if you choose to give it, use no added sugar squash or mix 1 part juice to 10 parts water. Avoid tea, coffee, sweetened and fizzy drinks.

Stage 4: Healthy eating for toddlers

From 12 months, your child should be offered family meals when possible. Continue to choose lower salt and sugar alternatives and serve with a portion of vegetables. Regular fruit and yoghurt/milk pudding desserts should be chosen in preference to high sugar chocolate desserts and mousses. Offer 3 meals a day and snacks as needed.

- If you choose to offer food between meals, stick to savoury snacks e.g. cheese and crackers, bread sticks, wholegrain pitta bread or vegetable sticks
- Full fat cow's milk can be offered as a drink
- Aim for 3 servings of foods containing dairy every day e.g. a bottle/ cup milk, milk on cereal, 1 pot of yogurt, cheese or milk pudding

Allergies

Recent research has shown that **delaying** the introduction of nuts (e.g. peanut butter) and hens' eggs after 6-12 months may increase the risk of developing an allergy to these foods.

These foods can be introduced from around 6 months as part of your baby's diet, just like any other foods:

- Cows' milk
- Eggs (eggs without a red lion stamp should not be eaten raw or lightly cooked)
- Foods that contain gluten, including wheat, barley and rye
- Nuts and peanuts (serve them crushed or ground)
- Seeds (serve them crushed or ground)
- Soya
- Shellfish (don't serve raw or lightly cooked)
- Fish

You should not delay introducing other **allergenic** foods, such as egg, wheat, fish or nut spreads. Once introduced and if tolerated, keep offering those foods as part of your baby's usual diet (to minimise the risk of allergy).

If you are concerned that food may cause a reaction, then try offering it in small amounts initially and check that it is tolerated. If you are still concerned that a food is causing a reaction, avoid that food and discuss this with your health visitor or Dietitian.

If your child has a food allergy, read food labels carefully. Avoid foods if you are not sure whether they contain the food your child is allergic to.

Nuts

Whole nuts should be avoided until 5 years of age due to choking risk. A small amount (1/16th of a baby spoon) of nut spreads (e.g. cashew, almond and peanut butter) should be tried initially on the lips. If tolerated, include nut spreads and ground nut in cooking regularly.

Eggs

Try to buy British Lion eggs, because they are very low risk for containing bacteria causing food poisoning (Salmonella). Avoid giving raw egg if you are not sure if it is a British Lion Egg. If there is no British Lion Egg mark, make sure they are well cooked until the egg white and yolk are hard.



Sugar

Sugar decays developing teeth and may lead to obesity later in life. If using pre-prepared baby food, choose no added sugar options. Check labels for added sugar e.g. glucose, sucrose, dextrose, fructose. It is important to regularly clean your child's teeth cleaning (twice daily) and to choose low sugar OR no added sugar foods and drinks.

Salt

Salt can be harmful to your baby's developing kidneys (especially under 6 months) and promotes a preference for salty food. Do not add to food or give foods containing high salt content e.g. soups, gravy, stock cubes, sauces/curries and try to reduce salt in cooking. Salt can be added to your portions after taking out your baby's portion. Choose low in salt or no added salt snacks e.g. baby corn puffs, rice sticks, bread sticks and not crisps.

Honey

Do not give honey to babies under 1 year of age as it can occasionally contain harmful bacteria spores.

Milk and Milk Products

Breast or formula milk should be the main drink until 1 year. At 6 months cow's milk can be used in cooking e.g. yoghurts, sauces and in cereals. After 1 year, pasteurised whole cow's milk can be used as a drink, taking 1 pint (568mls) in total each day. Excess may affect appetite. Semi-skimmed can be introduced after 2 years of age if your child is growing well.

Water

Babies under 6 months should only be given boiled and cooled tap water. Bottled water should not be given to babies due to its high salt content. If tap water is unsafe and you need to use bottled water, check the label to make sure the water contains less than 200mg per litre of sodium (also written as Na) and less than 250mg per litre of sulphate (also written as SO₄). Like tap water, bottled water needs to be boiled and cooled before use.

Vitamins (including vitamins A, C and D)

A multi-vitamin syrup that contains Vitamin D such as Healthy start vitamin drops, Abidec (contains peanut oil), Dalivit and Wellbaby multivitamin drops are suitable for children under 1 years of age and can continue to 5 years old. They are available from chemists, some supermarkets or Healthy Start (if eligible, and are licenced from 4 weeks onwards).

From birth to 1 year, vitamin D drops containing 8.5-10mcg should be given daily to:

- Exclusively breastfed babies
- Babies taking less than 500mls (17 fl.oz) infant formula per day (Infant formula is fortified with vitamin D)

Vitamin D sprays can be used on bottle teats or mother's nipple if breastfeeding for very young infants.

Useful link: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>