



Weaning means introducing food other than milk into your baby's diet. It is a gradual process and involves slowly giving your baby solid foods. This is necessary because a baby eventually needs more than milk in his diet to continue to grow and develop.

Moving on to solid food will not only provide your baby with more nutrients, but will also help develop the muscles necessary for chewing and eventually speech.

At what age should you wean your baby?

Current recommendations from health experts are to breast or bottle feed exclusively until your baby is six months old to ensure his digestive system is equipped to deal with solid food.

Up until then your baby gets all the nutrients he needs from milk. However, as he gets older milk alone cannot satisfy his nutritional needs.

If you think your baby is ready to start weaning before 6 months, get the advice of your health visitor first.

Throughout the leaflet we've often referred to your healthcare professional for further advice. Although this is most likely to be your health visitor or GP, you can also talk to a midwife, maternity support worker, breastfeeding counsellor or a nursery nurse for advice about weaning. For ease, throughout this leaflet we have referred to baby as he – this applies to both boys and girls.

How do I know whether or not my baby is ready to be weaned?

Each baby is different, so what may be right for one baby won't necessarily suit another. Signs that your baby is ready to start weaning include:

- He can hold his head up unsupported
- He can sit up when supported
- He shows an interest in what you're eating
- He starts waking up in the night for feeds when he wasn't previously
- He isn't satisfied by breast or bottle feeding

Safety, hygiene and storing food

Choking

- Always watch your baby while he is eating foods on which he could easily choke, for example raw carrot sticks, apple slices or grapes.
- Make sure you peel the skins from foods such as sausages, and remove any bones from meat or fish.

Allergies

- If you have a history of eczema, asthma or hayfever in your family then it's particularly recommended to breastfeed for the first six months.
- When weaning, introduce foods that most commonly cause allergies (milk, eggs, wheat, nuts and fish) one by one so you can spot any reactions.

Germ

- Always wash your hands before preparing your baby's food and check his hands are clean before eating!
- Clean surfaces and tableware before you use them. If you are preparing raw meat, keep a separate chopping board for this.
- Remember you need to sterilise all your baby's feeding equipment, including spoons, bowls and cups, until he is a year old.
- Don't re-use food that your baby has left at another meal. It may cause a tummy upset.
- Always wash and peel fruit and vegetables.

Storage

- Keep cooked and raw meats covered and away from each other and other foods in the fridge.
- Cooked food should only be re-heated once, and then thrown away if not eaten.
- Make sure food has cooled right down before putting it in the freezer, and make sure it's fully thawed when defrosting.
- When re-heating food make sure it is piping hot all the way through (allow it to cool down before feeding it to your baby).

For further advice on weaning your baby, speak to your healthcare professional or any of the following associations:

Food Standards Agency

www.eatwell.gov.uk

Department of Health

www.dh.gov.uk

For more information visit: www.tommeetippee.co.uk

**Tommee
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Professional Partnership



A parent's guide
to weaning

More than milk

How to start weaning your baby: take it step by step

Weaning is a gradual process. Go at your baby's own pace, as some take to it quicker than others. Breast or formula milk will still be the main part of your baby's diet, with a daily requirement of at least 5-6 breastfeeds or 500-600mls of formula. Where possible try to prepare your own weaning foods from fresh ingredients. It's easy and more nutritious.



More new tastes and lumpy food **Stage two**

- Once your baby is happy taking solid food you can move on to the next stage, lumpier more textured food, and gradually increase the amount of solid food from one feed to two, and then three feeds per day.
- As he starts to move on to solid foods it is a good idea to start introducing a cup of water to accompany each meal. If your baby is under 6 months old you should give cooled boiled water. After 6 months old he can have ordinary tap water. Bottled water is best avoided as it tends to be high in mineral salts, although there are some that are suitable for infant feeding. Check the label.
- Remember that milk still plays an important part in your baby's diet and he should still be having at least 500mls of formula or 5-6 good breastfeeds a day.
- Try and include your baby when the rest of the family are eating, so that mealtimes become a social occasion.

Some new foods to try at this stage are:

- Mashed up lean meat or poultry
- Mashed lentils or chick peas
- Full fat milk products, such as fromage frais, yoghurt or cheese sauce
- Mashed up white (e.g. cod) or oily (e.g. fresh salmon) fish
- Well-cooked egg



Why not try

Scrambled eggs made with a little of baby's usual milk and a little cheese sprinkled on top

Getting started **Stage one**

- Aim to give solid food at just one meal to start with. Decide which daytime feed is most relaxed, for example at lunchtime when other siblings maybe at school.
- Give your baby about half the normal amount of milk to quench his thirst and satisfy some of his hunger. Then offer a very small amount of pureed food, about a teaspoonful.
- Use bland pureed foods, for example blended vegetables or some baby rice mixed with breast or formula milk. Remember not to add any seasoning.
- You can make up a batch of puree and freeze in individual feed quantities. Ice cube trays or baby food pots are ideal for this.
- Do not worry if your baby appears to spit the food straight out. This is a completely new experience for him. Just be patient and prepared for some mess - it will take some time for your baby to get used to this new and very different way of eating!
- After a few weeks of introducing solid foods, you can gradually increase the amount of solid food from one feed a day to two. The more solids you introduce, the less milk your baby will require. However, milk is a vital part of your baby's diet, and so you should continue giving him breast or formula milk until he is at least 12 months old.

Some examples of first foods to feed your baby

- Pureed fruit or vegetables such as:
 - Banana, pear or mango
 - Potato, carrot, broccoli, cauliflower or swede
- Stewed fruit purees with baby rice
- Porridge made with baby rice and breast or formula milk

Foods to avoid

- Salt and spices
- Sugar and honey
- Eggs
- Nuts
- Shellfish
- Bread, cereal and pasta
- Cows' milk
- Blue cheeses
- Spicy foods
- Sugary soft drinks

What if my baby shows no interest in solid food?

- If your baby just doesn't seem interested in the food, then just wait and try again another time. You don't want to force him into eating when he's not ready.
- When feeding your baby, wait for him to open his mouth, rather than forcing the food in.
- Let your baby touch the food in the dish or on the spoon. Allow him to play with the food and feed himself as soon as he does show interest.
- Give your baby a whole range of foods and textures to taste. This will help prevent fussy eating when he is older.



Independence **Stage three**

- Once your baby has mastered the art of chewing food, you can start to introduce finger foods and encourage them to start feeding themselves.
- It can be a very messy stage but this is how babies learn.
- Aim to have three good healthy meals a day at this stage.
- Remember that although your child is becoming more independent you should never leave him alone while he is eating.

Foods to try

- Bread sticks or toast
- Chopped up fruit

Tools of the trade

Your baby will be getting used to holding a spoon or using his fingers by now. However, choosing the right spoon is important:

- The spoon should be plastic – a metal spoon will retain heat and could burn your baby's sensitive mouth.
- The spoon should be shallow – this will ensure all the food goes into your baby's mouth and doesn't stay on the spoon.
- A long handle is useful as it will reach more easily into storage pots.
- Look for a heat sensing spoon, which changes colour to warn when food is too hot to give to your baby.
- Some spoons have a stay clean feature, which means you can lay them down without the bowl touching the surface – great for saving mess, and avoiding germs.

Why not try 'Finger fruit salad'

- 1 apple
- 1 pear
- 1 banana
- 1 kiwi

Simply peel and core the fruit. Slice it into wedges and serve

Recipe by Caitilin Finch
Healthy First Foods for your Baby