



Weaning

Teaching your baby to enjoy good food

Teaching your baby to enjoy good foods

Weaning is a time for babies to learn to enjoy food. It is also a time to think about the balance of foods for your baby's health now and in the future. The foods your baby learns to eat now can have a big impact on how healthy a child and adult they become.

The supporting leaflet "*Weaning - What foods? When? How much?*" will also help you.

Recent evidence has led to the worldwide agreement that breast or formula milk is all that most babies need until they are six months old.

The information in this booklet is suitable for most babies. If however your baby has special dietary needs, speak to your health visitor before starting weaning.

Weaning

When should I start to wean?

- All babies are different but food other than milk is rarely needed before six months of age.
- Around six months old your baby may:
 - seem hungry after a good milk feed
 - start to demand feeds more often
 - wake more frequently during the night.

It might be time to start on solids - check with your health visitor as hunger is not the only reason for these.

- If your baby does not seem interested when you offer food from a spoon, leave it and try again in a few days time.

Why wait until six months?

- Introducing solids too early, particularly before seventeen weeks, may lead to your baby taking less milk. Breast or formula milk should be their main source of nutrition until after six months old.
- Babies weaned too early may gain excess weight, and may develop allergies and intolerances to some foods.
- Babies who are weaned at around six months should progress more quickly from smooth to lumpier textures. Different textures help with your baby's chewing and speech development.

What Mums say: *“Some mothers treat weaning like a race - rushing their babies on to solids then boasting about how much they eat at only three months old”.*

Weaning isn't a competition! What's important is that your baby learns about lots of different tastes and textures, not to be able to eat more bananas than anyone else!

What should I give?

Until now your baby has only ever tasted milk. Solid food is a new experience and will take time to learn. Let your baby try lots of different tastes over the next few months, even foods that you may not eat yourself. Don't let your own likes and dislikes affect what you offer your baby.

Weaning foods should not contain added salt, sugar, artificial colours, flavours, sweeteners or preservatives. They can be easily made at home from soft or cooked fruits and vegetables, and baby rice. You can also use tins, packets or jars of baby food.

Ready-made baby foods are handy when you are rushed, or if your own meal is not suitable for your baby. Take enough from the jar or tin for your baby, then store the remainder in a sealed container in the fridge. Use within 24 hours.

Things you should know before starting weaning

When can I give cows milk and other dairy foods?

Cows milk is not the same as human milk. The type of protein is different and the amounts of nutrients vary. In particular cows milk has little or no iron, therefore babies changed early to cows milk could develop iron-deficiency anaemia.

Breast milk or formula milk is recommended as the main drink from birth, and throughout the first year. There is no **real** need to use a follow-on formula, but they can be used with babies over six months.

Products made from cows milk; yoghurt, cheese or fromage frais can be included in your baby's diet just like any new food from six months of age. A small amount of whole cows milk can be used to mix foods and in cooking, but **should not be given as the main milk drink.**

Use full-fat milk for the first two years. If your child eats well, then semi-skimmed milk can safely be given from two years of age. Skimmed milk should not be given until around five years old.

Salt (sodium)

Salt should not be added to food for babies.

Babies do not need salt and large amounts could be harmful. Some foods are particularly salty and should not be used in the first few months of weaning e.g. packet sauces or stock cubes.

As babies get older their kidneys are more able to get rid of too much salt. Lightly salted family foods are suitable for babies over one year.

Restricting salty foods, particularly savoury snack foods like crisps, and not adding salt at the table can have long-term health benefits. Excess salt has been linked to raised blood pressure in later life.

Sugar

Sugar should not be added to weaning foods as this may encourage babies to prefer sweet foods - a major cause of tooth decay. Babies should be weaned on to a diet as free from added sugar as possible. Small amounts of sugar are fine to make sour foods more acceptable, e.g. in rhubarb. Foods which contain added sugar are best kept to meal times. A preference for sweet foods can contribute to excessive weight gain.

Iron

Iron is needed to keep the blood healthy. Breast milk and infant formula are good sources of iron. After the first six months of life, babies need to get iron from the foods they eat. Try to include some of the good sources of iron below;

- Red meat, chicken or turkey (dark meats), eggs, canned fish.
- Fortified breakfast cereals, lentils, peas, beans and some green vegetables.

Foods that may cause problems

Where there is a family history of allergy, the foods below should be introduced one at a time (and not before six months), and nuts (including peanuts) should be avoided for the first three years. Speak to your health visitor if you are concerned.

- Nuts and seeds - **Please note: whole nuts should not be given to babies and young children under the age of five due to the risk of choking.**
- Wheat products (eg. cereal, rusk, bread, pasta).
- Fish and shellfish.
- Citrus fruits and juices.

The following foods should not be introduced before **one year old**:

- Liver pate - rich source of Vitamin A which can be harmful to babies.
- Soft cheeses such as Brie - risk of food poisoning.
- Honey - risk of food poisoning.

Eggs should always be thoroughly cooked until the yolk and white are solid - again to avoid the risk of food poisoning. (Eggs can be introduced from six months old).

What drinks will my baby need?

Drinks (fluids) ensure that babies bodies function properly and help prevent constipation. Thirsty **breast-fed babies** can be put to the breast more often. Additional drinks from a bottle are not recommended until breastfeeding is established.

Cooled, boiled **water** should be the first choice of drink other than breast or infant formula. Drinks other than milk or water can damage teeth either because they are acidic or contain sugar.

To reduce the risk of tooth decay,

- a cup can be used from six months of age - use a free flow cup (one that fluid runs out of if tipped upside down)
- bottles should be discontinued by twelve twelve months of age
- drinks other than milk or cooled boiled water should be well-diluted (one part juice to ten parts cooled boiled water) and given at mealtimes from a cup only.

Well-diluted unsweetened pure fruit juice can be given from 6 months.

Fruit squashes and fizzy drinks should not be given to babies or young children as these contribute to dental problems. Diet or sugar free drinks are **not** intended for infants due to the high levels of sweeteners. Check labels on low sugar drinks - they may contain sugar **and** artificial sweeteners.

Baby juices and **herbal drinks** are not necessary. **Tea** should be avoided as it contains tannins, which can reduce the absorption of iron from food.

Remember once your baby gets used to other drinks it might be difficult to get them to accept milk or water in future.

Should I be giving my baby vitamin supplements?

Breast-fed babies from the age of six months may require vitamin drops. Ask your health visitor.

Infant formulas are fortified with vitamins, so formula-fed babies will not require additional supplementation if they are drinking at least 500mls of formula per day.

The provision of Healthy Start vitamins is currently under review. These vitamin supplements are free to families on income support, those on income based Jobseekers Allowance or Child Tax Credit. Please discuss with your health visitor.

If your baby was premature you may already be giving supplements as prescribed by the hospital. You should continue with these until told otherwise.

Discuss any queries you have with your health visitor.

Getting started

The information in the following section should be read along with the supporting leaflet *'Weaning - What foods? When? How much?'*, which gives you additional information and photographs on suitable foods and textures throughout weaning.

For recipe ideas please refer to the recipe section at the back of this booklet.

Making homemade first foods

- A fork is all you need to mash some soft foods.



- A hand blender or liquidiser is useful for larger amounts of food.



- Push cooked or tinned vegetables or fruits through a sieve with a spoon.



- Use the finest side of a grater to grate peeled fruit or vegetables to a pulp.



- All equipment must be clean - wash well in hot soapy water. Your baby will only eat tiny amounts at first. Any extra can be frozen in ice-cube trays. It is handy to take out a few ice cubes of food when you are in a hurry. Later you can use larger containers with lids, or small freezer bags.

First tastes

Taking food from a spoon is completely new to your baby and takes getting used to! The first few attempts may result in more food being pushed out of your baby's mouth than being swallowed - it can be a messy business! This is an opportunity for your baby to touch and explore food, so be prepared by having a clean cloth for wiping spills and cover any non-washable flooring. Try:

- Choosing a time of day when you are relaxed - lunchtime is usually a good time.
- Making sure your baby is not too tired or hungry - offer a small milk feed first.
- Offering puréed fruit or baby rice on the tip of a shallow plastic spoon.

Consistency

First foods should be soft, smooth and runny. If a fruit or vegetable purée is:

- Too thin - add a little baby rice to thicken.
- Too thick - thin down with milk.

Temperature

Food can be given cold, or warmed by placing the dish in a bowl of hot water.

*Heating food in the microwave is **not** recommended as:-a) the amount of food is very small and will dry out quickly and b) it can heat unevenly causing hot spots which could scald your baby's mouth.*

If you do decide to heat larger quantities in the microwave, mix well and leave the food to cool down before feeding your baby. In a hurry an ice-cube or cold yoghurt can quickly cool food down, or try placing the dish in a bowl of cold water.

Useful Tips

- Do not force your baby to eat, let them feed at their own pace.
- Make sure there are no distractions such as the television being on, or lots of toys being on the table.
- Solids should not be added to your baby's bottle. Doing this will reduce the amount of milk your baby drinks, and will fill them up too soon. Babies can exhaust themselves sucking semi-solid food through a teat. Have you ever tried drinking a thick milk shake through a straw?
- If your baby constantly spits food out - stop feeding and try again in a couple of days. It does not mean your baby dislikes the food, simply, that your baby is not ready for it at this stage.
- Try not to constantly wipe your baby's face - clean up at the end of the meal.

What next?

Over three or four days, gradually increase the amount of food your baby takes at their mealtime e.g. lunchtime. After a week introduce solid food at a second meal, maybe baby rice at breakfast. Try introducing puréed fruit with it.

Your baby may reduce the amount of milk taken as the amount of solid food increases, or may even cut out a milk feed completely - this is perfectly normal. Some babies take all the milk and all the solids they are offered - this is normal too.

Remember to introduce a new food every couple of days throughout these early weeks. This reduces the chance of faddy eating later on.

See **“Weaning - What foods? When? How much?”** for further suggestions.

Moving on - when can I give food with lumps?

Once your baby has learned to take a variety of smooth foods from a spoon, begin to offer lumpier, less well mashed foods. Soft lumps help encourage chewing.

Now is also the time to encourage your baby to hold food and to try feeding him/herself.

Finger foods

Babies like to try feeding themselves. Encourage this by giving your baby foods they can hold on their own.

Finger food ideas:

- Pieces of cooked chicken.
- Bread fingers.
- Rolls of boiled ham.
- Chunks of banana.
- Breadsticks.
- Pancakes.
- Fingers of toast.
- Sticks of cheese.
- Oatcakes.
- Individual cereal shapes.
- Rice cakes.
- Cooked vegetables.
- Cooked pasta shapes.
- Bread crusts baked in a slow oven to make rusks.
- Soft fruit eg. pear, peaches.

These foods are also suitable for snacks between meals or to keep a hungry baby going while your prepare a meal.

Stay with your baby in case of choking. You may need to help remove a piece of food if it gets stuck.

Family eating

When your baby is around one year old many of the meals you cook for yourself will also be suitable for them. Salt is a health issue for the whole family, not just your baby, so try not to add salt while cooking.

Processed, ready-made foods are usually high in salt, sugar and additives. Keep these to a minimum.

Family meals ideas:

- Meat and Vegetable Stew with potato.
- Fish Pie with Potato and Sweetcorn.
- Pasta Bolognese and Salad.
- Mince, Potatoes and Peas.
- Macaroni Cheese and Tomato.
- Vegetable Soup and Sandwiches.

Healthy eating for your child

Once a child is over one year old, regular family meals can be offered with small snacks in-between. It is important to remember that children under the age of five years old need lots of energy (calories) for growth and development. Young children (particularly those under two years of age) have small stomachs and therefore need to get enough energy from smaller amounts of food. For this reason, at this stage, fat is important e.g. that is why full-fat milk is recommended up to the age of two years.

Under the age of five, children should be eating a variety of foods from the four main food groups;

- Bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes.
- Fruit and vegetables.
- Milk and dairy.
- Meat, fish and alternatives.

Children over the age of five, and adults, are encouraged to follow healthy eating guidelines - again eating a variety of foods from the four main food groups, but keeping fat and sugar to a minimum.

Recipes

First tastes

These recipes will often make enough for more than one meal and are ideal for freezing.

Stewed fruit purée

Peel and wash the fruit. Remove any stones or pips. Chop into small pieces and place in a saucepan. Cover with a little water. Simmer until soft then mash and sieve to make a smooth purée. Try using apples, pears, apricots, plums. Dates or prunes can also be puréed.

Fresh or tinned fruit in natural juice

Peel fresh fruit and remove stones or pips. Grate or mash to a purée. Try using pear, peach, apricot, banana, melon.

Fruit puree with rice

Mix 1 teaspoon of baby rice with 1 tablespoon of breast milk or infant formula and a tablespoon of fruit purée.

Vegetable purée

Fresh, frozen or tinned vegetables can be puréed. Wash and peel fresh vegetables. Rinse tinned vegetables. Boil in unsalted water. When cooked, mash with a little cooking liquid. Sieve to give a thin purée.

Try using potato, carrot, parsnip, cauliflower, turnip, swede, broccoli, sweet potato.

Mixed vegetable puree

Once your baby is used to single tastes, cook and mash two vegetables together. Try swede and carrot or broccoli and potato.

Vegetables with fromage frais

Mash 2 tablespoons of cooked vegetables with a little cooking fluid.

Mix in 1 tablespoon of natural fromage frais, thicken with baby rice if necessary.

Moving on - introducing soft lumps

As your baby moves on, food should be mashed but less smooth and runny.

Soup

Small piece of finely chopped onion
25g (1oz) red lentils

Small piece of finely chopped carrot
210ml (7fl oz) water

Place all ingredients in a saucepan with the lid on. Simmer until the vegetables and lentils are soft. Mash to a soft, lumpy texture.

Fish

Wash a fish fillet. Poach or bake in a little water or whole milk. Remove any skin and check carefully for bones. Flake the fish then mash with a little cooking fluid. Serve with mashed potato and a mashed vegetable.

Porridge

Make with either oatmeal or oat flakes as described on the packet. Do not add salt. Serve with breast milk or infant formula. Try with mashed banana or stewed fruit for a change.

Basic white sauce

Measure 125ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ pint) of milk. Blend 1 tablespoon of cornflour with a little of this milk. Warm the remaining milk in a pan. Mix the milk into the cornflour paste then return the mixture to the pan. Simmer until thickened. Pour over fish, vegetables or pasta. Add 15g ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz) of grated cheese to make cheese sauce.

N.B. Do not use adult sauce or gravy mixes - they are too salty for babies.

Meat

Lean mince, beef, lamb, pork, chicken or turkey can be used to make soft lumpy meals. Chop meat into small $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cm square pieces. Simmer in water or the juice from tinned tomatoes until tender. Add chopped vegetables or frozen vegetables. Continue cooking until soft. Mash to a suitable texture with some cooking fluid. Serve with mashed potato.

N.B. Meat or poultry from many adult meals will be suitable, provided your baby's portion is taken out before salt, pepper or gravy browning is added.

Dahl/lentil soup

Weigh out 50g (2oz) of red lentils. Pick out any small stones. Place in a sieve and rinse under cold running water. Boil 3 cups of water in a small pot and add the lentils. Boil for 10 minutes then reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes until soft. Stir as the mixture thickens. Add milk to thin down if needed. Serve with rice or mashed potato. Diced carrots can be added to make a soup.

Other dried pulses can also be used for soft, lumpy meals. Follow the cooking instructions on the packet.

Fruit custard

Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon custard powder with a little milk. Heat 125ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ pint) milk in a pan. Add the warm milk to the custard paste. Return to the pan and heat. Stir until thick. Serve with mashed banana or other mashed or stewed fruit. Try mixing mashed fruit with yoghurt or fromage frais.

Family eating

Shepherds pie (2 adult portions)

200g (8oz) minced meat	25g (1 oz) diced onion	400g (1lb) potatoes
125ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ pt) water	1 tspn tomato purée	2 cups frozen mixed vegetables

Dry fry the meat with the onion in a saucepan. Add the water and tomato purée. Simmer for 40 minutes. Add the mixed vegetables and cook for a further 10 minutes. Boil the potatoes until tender. Drain and mash with a little milk. Put the mince in an ovenproof dish and cover with the mashed potato. Grill to brown the potatoes or bake for 30 minutes in the oven (Gas 4, 180°C, 350°F).

Cheesy mashed potatoes (Serves 4)

1kg (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs) potatoes, cut and peeled into even sized chunks	180mls (6fl oz) milk	15g ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz) butter or margarine
	150g (6oz) grated cheese	2 tomatoes, sliced

Boil the potatoes until tender. Drain and mash. Stir in the butter and milk. Beat in the grated cheese and season with a little salt and pepper. Spread the mixture in an ovenproof dish. Spread the tomatoes on top and sprinkle the cheese over the top. Brown under a grill. Serve with peas or broccoli.

Tuna fishcakes (2 adult portions or 6-8 child portions)

250g (10oz) tinned tuna in tomato sauce
2 teaspoons tomato purée

150g (6oz) boiled potatoes
Pepper, flour

Finely chopped spring onion

Mash the potatoes and stir in the tomato purée, a pinch of pepper and the spring onions. Add the tuna with some of its sauce. Shape into small balls and coat in the flour. Flatten with a fork. Either fry in a frying pan with a little oil or bake on a greased baking sheet in a hot oven (Gas 7, 210°C or 415°F) for 10 minutes. These fishcakes freeze well.

Baked bean mash

Mash 2 tablespoons baked beans with 1 tablespoon of mashed potato and either:
1 tablespoon cooked mince or 1 tablespoon grated cheese or 1 tablespoon cottage cheese.

Super sausages (Serves 3)

3 sausages

1 small onion, finely chopped

225g (9oz) baked beans

1 medium sized potato, peeled and chopped

200g (8oz) tin of tomatoes

Grill the sausages. Cool and slice them. Place the onion, potato and tomatoes in a saucepan. Simmer until the potato is cooked. Add in the baked beans and the sliced sausage. Heat through. Serve with wholemeal bread and a vegetable. Peas or frozen sweetcorn can be added towards the end of cooking.

Sandwiches

Sandwiches are always a handy, quick, filling meal. Serve with chopped cucumber, carrot sticks or tomato wedges.

As well as wholemeal, granary or white bread you could use tattie scones, finger rolls, french sticks, oatcakes, cheese scones, pitta bread, poppy seed topped buns.

For fillings try:

Mashed bananas.

Grated cheese or cheese spread.

Hard boiled egg and crispy bacon.

Tinned fish tuna or sardines.

Peanut butter and banana.

Wafer thin meat.

Fruit spreads or jams.

Mashed avocado.

Corned beef.

Follow with a yoghurt, some fruit and a glass of milk.

Apple crumble

675g (1½ lbs) cooking apples

5ml (1 tspn) mixed spice

45ml (3 tbsp) water

150g (6oz) flour

100g (4oz) sugar

75g (3oz) butter/margarine

Wash the apples. Remove the core and slice into a saucepan. Add the water, half the sugar and the mixed spice. Simmer for 10 minutes. Put the apples in a 2-pint ovenproof dish. Leave to cool.

Rub the butter into the flour until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs. Stir in the rest of the sugar. Spread over the top of the apples. Bake in the oven at 200°C, 400°F or Gas 6 for 20-25 minutes. Serve with ice-cream, custard or milk.

Please note:

1oz = 28g. For ease of conversion in the recipes however, 1oz. corresponds to 25g, and ½ oz. to 15g.

The bare essentials

DO...

- Start with smooth purées.
- Give foods from the different food groups.
- Let your baby begin to feed himself.
- Give your baby a variety of tastes.
- Progress at your baby's pace.
- Let your baby see you eating.

DON'T...

- Put solids in a bottle
- Force your baby to eat.
- Worry - weaning should be an enjoyable time.
- Add sugar or salt to food.
- Leave your baby alone when eating.

and finally.....

If you are worried about what your child eats, ask your health visitor.

Notes



Produced by Community Dietitians and Health Visitors

Designed by Corporate Graphic Design © NHS Grampian 2005

050021