



Baby Nosh

A short guide to introducing baby's first foods

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Baby steps

introducing first foods



The
Department
of Health
recommends
exclusive
breastfeeding for
the first six
months of life.

Complementary feeding, or weaning, is the gradual introduction of solid foods to a baby's diet. For the first 6 months, breastmilk or infant formula provides all the nutrients a baby needs, but as they get older, they need more nutrients from food to help them grow and develop well.

During this time, babies will begin to experience a range of new tastes and textures. This booklet will help to guide you as you begin to introduce your baby to their first foods.

When is it best to start?

Let your baby guide you. Start at around 6 months, when your baby is showing these 3 signs that they are ready:

- They are able to stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady
- They can coordinate lifting food and putting it in their mouth
- They can swallow food and not push it back out.

Introduce these foods one by one and not before your baby is 6 months old:

- milk and dairy foods
- eggs
- foods containing wheat or gluten
- nuts and peanuts
- seeds
- fish and shellfish

Pre-term babies

If your baby was born prematurely, ask their medical team for guidance. The appropriate age for introducing first foods will depend on how prematurely your baby was born.

See www.bliss.org.uk for further information on weaning premature babies.

Where to begin?

Some babies will be ready to move on to mashed and finger foods immediately, whereas others may prefer smoother foods.

Offer a suitable food to complement a milk feed. Start slowly – try a few finger foods or baby feeding spoons of:



baby cereal mixed with breastmilk or infant formula (e.g. porridge)



cooked fruit or vegetables, puréed



soft fruit, mashed or as finger food (e.g. banana, mango, melon or avocado)



mashed or as soft cooked vegetable sticks (e.g. potato, yam, parsnip, apple or pear, cool before eating)

What next? From 6 months...

Go for textures

Gradually introduce foods with soft lumps so your baby can get used to foods with different textures.

Finger foods

Cut up foods into pieces big enough for your baby to hold in their fist, with a bit sticking out at the top. Pieces about the size of your own finger work well.

New foods

Gradually introduce more new foods! Try soft cooked meat (e.g. chicken), pasta, lentils, and hard boiled eggs.

Go for variety

Offer small amounts of different foods on different days. Babies sometimes take time to get used to new foods - this is completely normal.

Now is the time

Introduce whole milk yogurt, fromage frais and custard.

Cups

Introduce an open cup or free flow cup (with no valve), and offer sips of water with meals. This will help your baby learn to sip and is better for their teeth. Aim to discontinue bottles around their first birthday.

Vitamins

The Department of Health recommends that children aged 6 months to five years are given daily supplements of vitamins A, C and D. Infant formula is fortified with these nutrients so healthy babies having 500ml or more a day don't need supplements.



Do it in steps

Gradually increase the amount and variety of foods your baby eats until they can eat 3 small family meals a day, with no added salt or sugar.

Foods to take care with

Foods that can cause allergies (e.g. eggs, wheat, nuts, soya, seeds, fish, milk), and foods containing these ingredients, should be introduced one at a time with 2-3 days in between so you can spot a reaction. If there is a family history of food allergy, speak to your healthcare professional before introducing foods from the list above.

Soya-based infant formula and soya products should only be used if advised by your healthcare professional, as babies who are allergic to cow's milk may also have other allergies.

Foods that could cause choking

To prevent choking, and before giving foods to your baby:

- Peel and lightly cook hard fruits and vegetables e.g. apples and carrots
- Slice small round foods e.g. grapes or cherry tomatoes
- Cut cheese into sticks rather than cubes
- Remove any stones or pips
- Remove all skin and bones from meat and meat products e.g. sausages and chicken.

Always stay with your baby when they are eating in case they start to choke.

Consult your health visitor if you have concerns about allergy.

Not for little tumms

Sugar Your baby does not need added sugar. Avoiding sugary snacks and drinks will help prevent tooth decay.

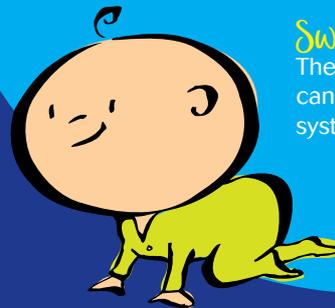
Honey Do not introduce before age 1 year as it sometimes contains a bacteria that can produce toxins, and may lead to infant botulism.

Salt Do not add salt to your baby's food. Use herbs and spices rather than salt to flavour food.

Whole Nuts As they may cause choking. You can use nut butters and crushed nuts in food.

Foods intended for adults e.g. low-fat, low-sugar, artificially sweetened foods. Raw or undercooked fish or meat.

Swordfish, marlin and shark
The amount of mercury in these fish can affect a baby's growing nervous system.



Top tips

First foods

Handy hint

- Make batches of mashed or puréed food and freeze in ice-cube trays or containers
- Defrost cubes as required in the fridge overnight or defrost in the microwave
- Reheat food thoroughly until hot all the way through
- Remember to let food cool down before offering it to your baby.



Allow your baby to feed themselves using their fingers, as soon as they show an interest.

It can get messy but this is an important part of your baby's development.

Water should be offered with all meals.

Continue to offer breastmilk or formula throughout the day.

Gradually reduce milk feeds as your baby starts eating more food.

Never leave your baby alone with a bottle, or give one to help with sleep, as it could cause choking.

Milky matters



Only breastmilk or infant formula should be given as a main drink for under-ones. As babies start to eat more solid food, they will want fewer milk feeds so you can drop them gradually.

'Follow-on' formula can be introduced only after 6 months **but it is not necessary to move your baby on to these milks.**

Whole cow's milk can be given as a drink once your child is 1 year old.

Milk-based puddings like yogurt or rice pudding are good milky options.

You may choose to continue giving your baby breastmilk alongside family foods for as long as it suits you and baby.

Milk-like drinks are not nutritionally similar to cow's milk, and may be low in protein and other important nutrients. If your little one has a cow's milk allergy, speak to a Registered Dietitian for advice.

Rice drinks aren't suitable for children under 5 because of the levels of arsenic they contain. Other alternatives to cow's milk can be served after your child is 1 year old.

From 7-9 months on...

You may offer your baby 3 meals a day, in addition to breastmilk or formula.

Infants of this age should still be given milk feeds responsively, but may want about four feeds a day.

They will be having a mixture of soft finger foods, mashed and chopped foods.

Each day try to give your baby a variety of foods including:

- **Fruit and vegetables**
- **Starchy foods** (e.g. bread, rice, pasta and potatoes)
- **Meat, fish** (well-cooked, no bones), **well-cooked eggs, pulses** (peas, beans or lentils)
- **Whole milk and dairy products** Dairy products made from whole milk, such as unsweetened yogurt, fromage frais and custard. Small amounts of whole milk can be used in cooking or added to other foods such as cereal.

Feeding a one-year-old

Your baby can join in with the family by eating 3 meals a day by their first birthday.

Try and make their diet as varied as possible.

Whole milk can now be introduced as a main drink. Milk should be given in a cup.

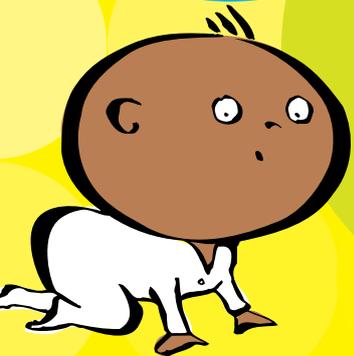
Each day try to give your child:

- **Starchy foods** 3 to 4 servings (e.g. potatoes, pasta, rice, bread)
- **A variety of protein** 2 servings of meat, fish or alternative protein sources (e.g. beans and lentils)
- **Fruit and vegetables** Encourage your child to try lots of different fruit and veg. Aim for 5 servings a day. Try adding banana or grated apple to breakfast cereal or carrots or red pepper to pasta sauces to boost servings
- **Whole milk and dairy** 3 servings a day as a drink, in milk-based dishes, or as cheese, yogurt or fromage frais.

Safe food

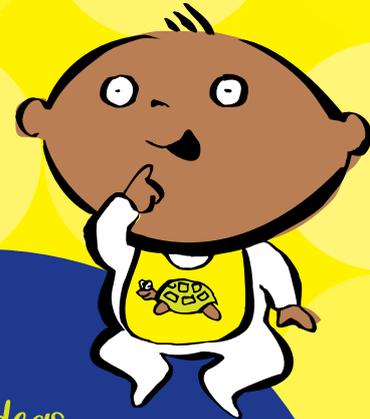
Top tips for keeping baby food safe

- Keep all utensils and surfaces clean.
- Wash your hands and your baby's hands before meals.
- Thoroughly wash all bowls and spoons for feeding.
- Peel or wash fruit and veg.
- Throw away half-eaten food.
- When heating up food, always stir it well and make sure it's steaming all the way through.
- Cooked food should not be reheated more than once.
- Cook all food thoroughly and check the temperature before offering food to your baby.



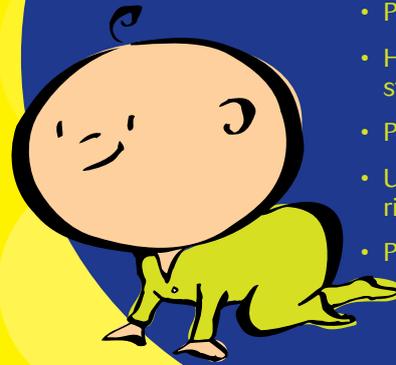
Snack attack

Babies have small tummies and so smaller, more frequent meals and healthy snacks will suit them better.

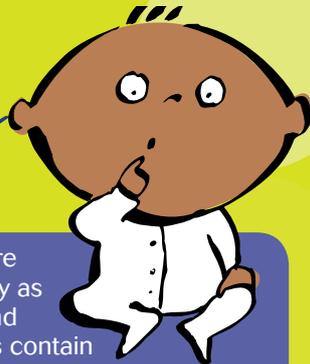


Some snack ideas to try:

- Canned fruit in fruit juice
- Soft, peeled fresh fruit
- Plain yogurt with sliced grapes
- Hard cheese (sliced or cut into sticks) and sliced tomatoes
- Pitta or chapatti fingers
- Unsalted and unsweetened rice cakes
- Pepper sticks



Your questions answered



Should I give my baby fruit drinks, squash or fruit juice?

Fruit juices are not necessary as breastmilk and formula milks contain vitamin C. It is best for your baby to learn to like water as a drink. If you give fruit juice dilute it well, restrict it to mealtimes and only give it in an open cup or a free-flow cup (with no valve), never a bottle, to prevent damage to the teeth.

The best drinks to give between meals are breastmilk or infant formula, or water. All water should be boiled and then cooled for babies under six months. Bottled water is not sterile and may contain too much sodium (salt).

When should I switch my baby from a bottle to a cup?

Introduce an open cup or a free-flow cup (with no valve) when your baby is six months old. Try and finish with the bottle by his or her first birthday. Prolonged bottle feeding may damage teeth.

Should I give my baby ready-made baby food?

Jars of ready-made baby food are convenient, but portion sizes are often too big and much of it has the same texture. Homemade baby food is usually cheaper and made from simple ingredients. If you do buy ready-made food, look at the ingredients label to check that it does not contain added sugar or salt. Don't reuse food that your child has half-eaten.

Can I give my baby low-fat foods?

No, save low-fat foods for later in life. Babies need fat to help them grow and develop. For example, choose yogurts made from whole milk.

How can I make sure my baby gets enough iron?

Babies are born with a store of iron that will last about six months. After that they need to get iron from their food. Give your baby some red meat e.g. beef, some dark poultry meat such as thigh or leg meat, some eggs and pulses e.g. lentils. Giving these foods alongside vitamin C containing foods such as tomatoes and green vegetables will help them make the best use of the iron.

Is it OK to give my baby goat's or sheep's milk?

These can be used in cooking after 6 months but not as a drink until age 1 year as they don't contain all the nutrients that babies need.

Information sources

NHS Choices:

Drinks and cups for babies and young children <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/drinks-and-cups-for-babies-and-young-children/> [accessed 01/2021]

Food allergies in babies and young children www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/food-allergies-in-children.aspx [accessed 01/2021]

Foods to avoid giving babies and young children www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/foods-to-avoid-baby.aspx [accessed 01/2021]

Your baby's first solid foods www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/solid-foods-weaning.aspx [accessed 01/2021]

First Steps Nutrition Trust (2020) Eating well for new mums: Including information for breastfeeding mothers <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-infants-new-mums> [accessed 01/2021]

NHS Start 4 Life:

What is weaning? www.nhs.uk/start4life/first-foods [accessed 01/2021]

Getting ready <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/getting-ready/> [accessed 01/2021]

Ready or not? <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/ready-or-not/> [accessed 01/2021]

What to feed your baby <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/what-to-feed-your-baby/> [accessed 01/2021]

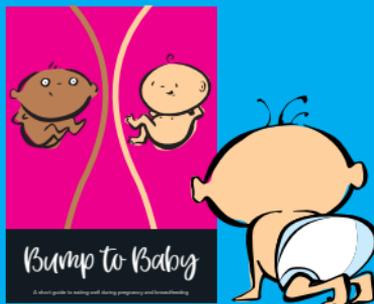
BDA Complementary feeding (weaning):

Food Fact Sheet <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/complementary-feeding-weaning.html> [accessed 01/2021]

Bliss Weaning your premature baby

<https://www.bliss.org.uk/parents/about-your-baby/feeding/weaning-your-premature-baby> [accessed 01/2021]

Healthy Start Scheme Healthy Start Vitamins www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthystartvouchers/healthy-start-vitamins/ [accessed 01/2021]



For details on additional information sources please contact Dairy UK

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