

Time to start solid foods?



When should my baby start solid foods?

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.



Does my baby still need milk?

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.

How do I know when 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:

- ✓ Sit up and hold their head steady
- ✓ Use their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at food, pick it up and put it in their mouth
- ✓ Swallow food rather than push it back out

3 signs mistaken for a baby being ready

- ✗ Chewing fists
- ✗ Waking in the night (more than usual)
- ✗ Wanting extra milk feeds

What if my baby doesn't want to eat?

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.

How much food does my baby need?

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.



How much sugar should my baby eat?

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 too, so avoid these to help prevent tooth decay. Even baby and toddler drinks can be sugary. Your baby doesn't need these.

Offer sips of water from a cup with meals instead.

Weaning doesn't have to be confusing. We have the answers to all your questions, plus top tips and tasty recipes to try.

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A simple, step by step guide to starting weaning



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

TIP Your baby will still need milk, for nutrients and energy.

Babies love finger food

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.

Food groups

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

Veg: like broccoli, cauliflower, spinach and carrot

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

Fruit: like bananas, oranges, apples, melon, peaches and plums

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

From around **6** months old

TIP Foods most likely to cause allergies (such as peanuts, eggs, or fish) can be introduced one at a time from around six months. Remember, peanuts should be crushed or ground to avoid choking.

Start with small portions

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

Choose single fruit and veg first

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.

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.

From around **7-9** months

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.

TIP Include vegetables that aren't so sweet (like broccoli, cauliflower and spinach). This can help prevent fussy eating.

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).

From around **10-12** months

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

Eat together to help your baby learn

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.

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.

Start enjoying 3 meals a day

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

12 months +

Peek-a-boo! What can I see? Healthy meals for the whole family!

Better Health has simple recipes for baby that the whole family can enjoy too.

Your baby may now need two healthy snacks in between meals (like fruit and vegetable sticks, toast, bread or plain yoghurt).

TIP Plain water is the best drink at mealtimes. Avoid sugary drinks as these can cause tooth decay.

Ready to drink cows' milk

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

to cut food into sticks, avoid round shapes and firm foods. Firm fruit & vegetables can be softened by cooking.

Check out our recipes and advice for each weaning stage:

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