

Time to start solid foods?

A guide to help you
wean your baby



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.



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



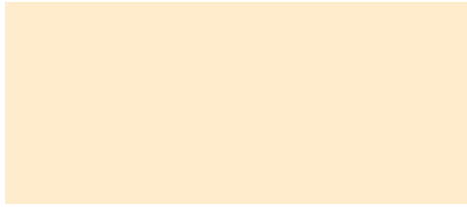
Waking in the night (more than usual)



Wanting extra milk feeds

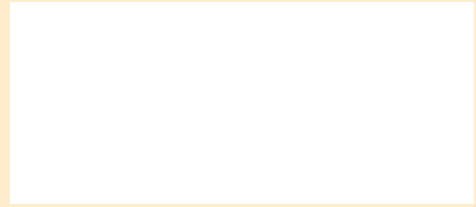
Does my baby still need milk?

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.



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.



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.

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.



A simple, step by step guide to starting weaning



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.

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.

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.

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.

From
around
7-9
months

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

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

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.

Tip

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

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.



From
around
10–12
months



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).

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.



Check out our recipes and advice for each weaning stage: search **“best start in life weaning”**



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

Best Start in Life 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).

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: search **“best start in life weaning”**

Ready to drink cows' milk

Your baby can now drink cows' milk. Choose whole or semi-skimmed from the age of 1.

Carry on breastfeeding for as long as you both want.

Tip

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





Welcome to Best Start in Life.

Whether you're newly pregnant or navigating your child's early years, the Best Start in Life website offers clear, NHS-approved guidance every step of the way.

Find trusted advice on pregnancy, feeding and weaning, understanding your baby, early learning, bonding, childcare support and preparing for school.

Reliable, reassuring information for every stage of your journey.

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