



Feeding the under 3s
the food they need

Weaning – learning to like new tastes and textures

Guidance & Tips for Parents

www.infantandtoddlerforum.org

WEANING:
AN INTRODUCTION

WEANING:
ADDITIONAL FACTORS

WEANING:
WHEN TO START

WEANING:
AGE 6-9 MONTHS

WEANING:
AGE 9-12 MONTHS
AND THEREAFTER

Complementary feeding or weaning is introducing solid foods in addition to your baby's milk feeds.

Babies develop at different rates so begin when your baby is ready – by six months, but not before four months. This is when healthy term babies are ready to learn new feeding skills and when milk feeds alone no longer provide all the nutrients and calories they need to grow and develop normally.

It is best for your baby's health to continue breastfeeding while you are weaning.

As you offer new tastes and textures your baby will learn to like those tastes and will learn new feeding skills by managing different textures. Some babies need:

- small tastes of certain foods on several different days before they learn to like it
- more practice with new textures before they master eating them and are ready to move on

So keep offering foods, even if your baby seems reluctant to eat them at first. But always allow your baby to decide when he/she has had enough to eat. He/she will indicate this by turning their head away or keeping their mouth shut.

Include your baby in as many family meals as possible because they also learn by copying those around them.

Foods to offer during weaning

Most parents or carers begin with cereal mixed with their infant's milk or root vegetables or fruit but you can start with any nutritious family foods. Offer different foods at every meal time and when your baby is having three meals in the day make sure you are offering foods from all four food groups each day:

1. Starchy foods

- Baby rice and other baby cereals, porridge, oats and oatmeal
- Potato, rice, pasta
- Foods made from cornmeal, maize, millet and quinoa
- Toast, breads, chapatti, breadsticks, crackers, crispbread

2. Fruit and vegetables

- All vegetables
- All fruit

3. Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses

- Lean meat, poultry and fish – well-cooked, remove all bones
- Eggs – well-cooked e.g. scrambled
- Dhal, lentils, hummus, chick peas and other pulses
- Nuts – ground or as nut butter e.g. ground almonds and smooth peanut butter

4. Cheese, yogurt and milk puddings

- Plain yogurt and fromage frais
- Grated cheese melted onto warm foods, and cheese cubes as finger foods
- Whole cows' milk can be used in mixing foods or for making milk puddings such as rice pudding

Babies prefer flavourful meals to just one food on its own. You can use herbs and spices, but not salt, to add more flavour.



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Foods not recommended before 12 months of age:

- Honey
- Foods with added salt and packet snack foods such as crisps
- Unpasteurised soft cheeses
- Hot chillies
- Foods with added sugar

Foods to be given occasionally:

- Liver – limit to once per week
- Oily fish – limit to twice per week

Food Allergies

The foods most likely to cause an allergic reaction should be introduced one at a time so that it is easy to identify if a certain food has caused a reaction. You can start to introduce these foods once your baby is eating cereals and fruit and vegetables.

These foods are:

- Foods based on cows' milk – formula milk, yogurt, fromage frais, cheese
- Foods based on wheat – bread, pasta, and some breakfast cereals
- Eggs
- Fish and shellfish
- Nuts
- Soy
- Sesame seed, mustard seed
- Celery
- Any foods containing sulphites

Very few babies develop food allergies, but babies with a parent or sibling with asthma, eczema, hay fever or food allergy are at risk of developing allergic disease themselves. Mothers of these babies are advised to continue breastfeeding throughout weaning. Whilst research is on-going, recent studies indicate that avoiding these foods before a certain age will not prevent a food allergy developing.

Pre-prepared foods for babies

Those made specifically for babies state the age range at which they are appropriate to be introduced. Although these foods can be useful at certain times, it is important to offer your baby family foods when possible as your baby needs to eat them regularly to learn to like them. Family foods offered to babies should be nutritious foods.



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Feeding young children:
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Beginning weaning – by six months but not before 4 months

Texture

Begin with a smooth mash or puree for the first few tastes. Your baby needs to learn how to move the food to the back of the mouth to swallow it. This may take a few days and you may see the food coming straight back on his/her first few attempts as she/he pushes the tongue forward, as babies do when sucking a nipple or teat. Move on to thicker purees or well-mashed food as your baby becomes used to taking food from a spoon. Offer some soft finger foods as well - your baby can play with them and may suck them.



Meals

Begin offering food once a day, and offer it half way through the milk feed. Once your baby is used to taking food, offer it before the milk feed and increase to two, then three meals a day, offering different foods at each meal e.g.

- Baby cereal and fruit at breakfast
- Meat/pulses + potato/rice + vegetables at midday
- Yogurt and fruit in the evening

Drinks

Your baby should continue with his/her milk feeds.

Breastfed babies do not need any water but on a very hot day formula-fed babies can be offered boiled, cooled water if parents think they are thirsty between feeds.



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Age six to nine months

Texture

Once your toddler has learnt to accept smooth foods, move on to mashed food with soft lumps and offer soft finger foods with all meals. Meat may still need to be pureed but can be mashed if it is very soft. Nuts should be finely ground or as nut butter.

3 meals per day

- Breakfast: Breakfast cereal with fruit + toast fingers
- Midday meal: Meat/fish/pulses + potato/rice + vegetables
Fruit and yogurt/milk pudding
- Evening meal: Egg/pulses/cheese + pasta/crackers/toast + vegetables



Examples of soft finger foods:

- Soft fruit pieces e.g. mango, melon, banana, soft ripe pear, peach, papaya and kiwi
- Cooked vegetable sticks e.g. carrot sticks, green beans, courgette sticks, potato and sweet potato
- Cooked vegetable pieces e.g. cauliflower and broccoli florets
- Cooked pasta pieces
- Crusts of bread or toast
- Cheese cubes
- Roasted soft vegetable sticks e.g. potato, sweet potato, parsnip, pepper, carrot and courgette



Drinks

- Your baby should continue with breast or formula feeds
- Offer sips of water from a cup with meals
- Babies do not need juice as they will be getting enough vitamin C from breast milk or formula milk and the fruit and vegetables you offer

Vitamin supplements

Breastfed babies should begin a supplement containing vitamins A & D by six months as they may not get enough of these two vitamins from their milk and food. Formula milks are fortified with these vitamins so formula fed babies can begin the supplement when formula milk feeds have reduced to less than 500mls/day. Some babies may be advised to begin vitamin drops from soon after birth.



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Age nine to 12 months

Texture

During this time, move on to minced and chopped foods and encourage your baby to self-feed. Include harder finger foods such as raw fruit and vegetable sticks, as well as a variety of family foods such as sandwiches or toast. Nuts should be crushed, chopped or finely ground.

3 meals per day

Include your baby in family meals and offer family foods that have been prepared without salt or sugar.

Drinks

Continue offering a cup of water with all meals.

Milk feeds should gradually be cut down to two to three each day.

They can be offered from a cup rather than a bottle.



After 12 months of age

Foods

By the age of one year toddlers should be joining in and eating nutritious family meals.

Some foods are best avoided until around five years:

- Whole nuts - from this age the risk of choking or inhalation is lowered
- Raw shell fish - children over five years are better able to cope with the diarrhoea and vomiting which could occur if they get food poisoning
- Bran and breakfast cereals containing bran

Drinks

Drinks from bottles should be cut out around 12 months of age and all drinks including milk should be offered from a cup. About 100-120mls (3-4 oz) is the average sized drink for babies over 12 months.

Offer 6-8 drinks each day – one drink with each meal and one in between meals with a snack. This includes milk drinks.

Milk drinks should now be only 100-120mls (3-4 oz) and offered from a cup. They should be limited to three times a day or less if cheese and yoghurt are eaten regularly.

Cows' milk can be introduced at one year. It should be whole or full fat milk as this has more vitamin A than lower fat milks. Semi-skimmed milk should not be introduced until at least two years of age.

Follow-on formula or growing up milk rather than cows' milk may be considered for toddlers who do not eat well. These formula milks are fortified with iron and vitamin D.



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