

Weaning & When Best to Start



INFANT WEANING

Or Food for the under ones should be fun

Starting

Ideally it is best to introduce solid foods from about 6 months (26 weeks), before that the infant will get their nourishment from breast milk or infant formula.

But all babies are different, some start solid food earlier, some take to it quickly and others take longer, some are choosy and others like everything (just the same as adults). A bitter taste is still a bitter taste no matter how many times we try it!

Introducing food at 6 months could reduce the risk of asthma, eczema, digestive problems, allergies, dental decay and obesity in later life.

It may be easier as there is no need to puree food for those over 6 months old.

Bigger babies at birth or now do not need food earlier they can be given more milk. If they are not sleeping through the night there is no evidence that weaning earlier will help. Further advice can be obtained from your Health Visitor/health professional.

When is your baby ready?

- ✕ They can sit up – Place them in a highchair to eat.
- ✕ Their eye and co-ordination had developed so they can reach out and grab things accurately.
- ✕ They take things into their mouth and chews rather than automatically pushing them out i.e. their tongue thrust is gone.
- ✕ They are no longer satisfied by milk feeds

Drinking

6 months is also a good time to introduce a free flow cup to your child with either tap water or expressed breast milk or formula milk. Cow's milk doesn't have the right balance of nutrients for under 1's, and the iron in cow's milk is not absorbed easily. Tea or coffee should **NOT** be given as it blocks the absorption of nutrients and acts as a stimulant.

Bottled water – if you have to use it abroad (remember they can have tap water from 6 months in the UK) check the label that it has **less than 200mg** per litre of **sodium (Na)** and **less than 250mg** per litre of **Sulphates (SO)**.

If you are making up bottles with bottled water then it still needs boiled before you prepare formula feeds and the same if your baby is under 6 months old and you wish to give it water, bottled water is not sterile.

Time to Start?

Start with a few teaspoons of well mashed food at one meal time, this may be mid-morning or mid-afternoon, when both of you are not rushed or busy or when baby is tired or very hungry. You may want to offer a part feed before trying the solids. Amounts of solid food will gradually increase as the baby gets used to food in their mouths and eventually the amount of milk they take will decrease.



Allow the baby to feed themselves (baby lead weaning) or have an extra spoon available to play with and 'help' with feeding; many parents choose to combination feed with finger foods and spoon feeding it is up to you just remember to offer a wide range of food and textures. Remain relaxed.

Baby lead weaning is seen to allow babies to learn appetite control, so they eat when they are hungry and stop when full. This may help reduce the chance of obesity in later life.

Let the baby place lumpy/chunks of food into their mouth as they place it in the right part of the mouth to allow successful chewing and swallowing.





Make your own foods without adding sugar and salt; use herbs, onions, garlic and spices for flavour. Good foods are sweet potatoes, porridge, noodles, couscous, yams, plantains, chapattis, fruits and vegetables including mashed banana, cooked carrot, sliced pear or sticks of melon, White fish, oily fish, chicken, eggs, pulses, Quorn and tofu. Dairy should be full-fat as they need the extra energy until 2 years old, full-fat plain yoghurt, full-fat fromage frais (watch for sugar content) and full-fat cow's milk when cooking or unsweetened fortified soya milk if avoiding dairy.

- Start with some mashed foods like banana, stewed apple or pear, potato, carrot, turnip, parsnip or cauliflower
- Small pieces or sticks of raw soft fruit – banana, avocado, peaches, pears, melon, strawberries, kiwi fruit, cucumber, mango
- Small pieces or sticks of cooked vegetables – carrot, broccoli, sweet potato, potato, courgette, butternut squash, cauliflower
- Toast, bread, pitta bread, rice cake or bread stick
- Cheese (grated, sticks or cubed), slices of hard boiled eggs, chunks of cooked fish (remove all bones) that can be picked up
- Use mashed up healthy family foods where possible
- Baby rice or other cereal mixed with usual milk

Watch for hidden sugars, salts and saturated fats in infant foods. Avoid honey until over 1 (infant botulism).

- Never leave your baby alone while they eat in case they choke.
 - Do not put any foods in to the baby's bottle.

Eating food will be messy; a great way to encourage children to be less fussy is by letting them play with their food, while eating it.

Other textures for them to play with are jelly, yoghurt, custard, gloop – corn flour and water mix.

Let meal time be an activity time of the day, its 30 minutes of entertainment for the children.



If mess is an issue place a covering over the floor that can be easily washed or a shower curtain can be used, the baby/child can be stripped down to a vest and nappy, if warm enough, to lessen washing!

Eating with others allows the primitive brain of the baby to see that the food is safe to eat; this is why often toddlers will want to eat off a parent's plate and not off their own plate, even if it is the same food!

Solids help babies to practice lip, tongue and jaw movements required for speech and language.

Quorn and processed soya products are low in calories and high in fibre and maybe difficult for babies to digest, they can also be high in salt. Do not introduce before 9 months and then only in small amounts.

Before 6 months

If you need to wean before 6 months and not before 4 months (17 weeks), then wheat (breakfast cereals, bread), citrus fruits, strawberries and raspberries, fish and shellfish, cows, goats and sheep's milk, soya based products, eggs, liver, peanut containing foods, soft and unpasteurised cheeses, nuts and seeds, salt, chicken, meat should **NOT** be given.

The food will also have to be pureed to a smooth, thin consistency – pureed fruit apple, pear or banana; pureed vegetables potato, carrot, parsnip.

Ingredients - what does it mean?

The largest ingredient is listed first.

Fructose, sucrose, maltose, glucose, dextrose, invert sugar, glucose syrup, honey, fructose, syrup, maltodextrin, concentrated fruit juice. All are sugar (empty calories).

Added water – used to make foods go further.

Added vitamins – added to replace natural vitamins, lost during processing, maybe added as a natural colouring ingredient e.g. carotene.
Organic foods cannot have vitamins added to them.

Maltodextrin, whey, emulsifiers – cheap fillers used to add bulk to the food.

Yeast extract – hidden salt flavour.

What is high or low?

SUGARS

Carbohydrates (of which are sugars)
High is more than **15g** sugar per 100g
Low is **5g** or **less** per 100g



SALT

Babies need only a very small amount of salt – less than 1g (0.4g sodium) a day up to 12 months. Their kidneys can't cope with larger amounts of salt.

The daily recommended maximum for children depends on their age:

- 1 to 3 years – 2g salt a day (0.8g sodium)
- 4 to 6 years – 3g salt a day (1.2g sodium)
- 7 to 10 years – 5g salt a day (2g sodium)
- 11 and over – 6g salt a day (2.4g sodium)



Remember there is no need to add salt to your child's food.

High is more than **1.5g** salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium)
Low is **0.3g** salt or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium)

If you only have a figure for sodium, work out how much sodium is in the amount you will eat. And then multiply this by 2.5 to find the amount of salt.

SATURATED FATS

High is more than **5g** saturated fat per 100g

Low is **1.5g** saturated fat per 100g



FOOD ADDITIVES/E NUMBERS

These are substances added to foods to perform a range of specific functions. They may be natural, nature identical or artificial.

We use them to keep food wholesome until eaten, make the food look and taste better, keep the price of food down, make the food healthier by increasing the vitamins or reducing fat, and they aid the processing and manufacture.

ANTIOXIDANTS - These make foods last longer by helping to stop the fats, oils and certain vitamins from combining with oxygen in the air - this is what makes food taste 'off' - become rancid and lose colour. Vitamin C, also called ascorbic acid or E300, is one of the most widely used antioxidants. Vitamin E is used to preserve fats.

PRESERVATIVES - To stop mould or bacteria growing, dried fruit is often treated with sulphur dioxide (E220); and bacon, ham, corned beef and other 'cured' meats are often treated with nitrite and nitrate (E249 to E252) during the curing process.

More traditional preservatives such as sugar, salt and vinegar are also still used to preserve some foods.

COLOURS - Used to make food look better especially if food loses its colour during processing. Colours commonly found include caramel (E150a), which is used in products such as gravy and soft drinks; and curcumin (E100), a yellow colour extracted from turmeric roots.

Certain combinations of the following artificial food colours: sunset yellow (E110), quinoline yellow (E104), carmoisine (E122), allura red (E129), tartrazine (E102) and ponceau 4R (E124) have been linked to a negative effect on children's behaviour.

EMULSIFIERS - Lecithins (E322), mixes oil and water together.

STABILISERS - locust bean gum (E410) is made from carob beans, prevents oil and water from separating.

GELLING AGENT - pectin (E440), gives a gel-like consistency, FLAVOUR ENHANCERS - monosodium glutamate (E621), known as MSG, is added to processed foods, especially crisps, soups, sauces and sausages.

SWEETENERS - aspartame (E951), saccharin (E954) and acesulfame-K (E950) are many times sweeter than sugar and so only very small amounts are used. Sorbitol (E420), have about the same sweetness as sugar and so they are used in similar amounts to sugar. These should not be given to babies and children.

VITAMINS & MINERALS

Vitamin D – is naturally obtained through exposure to sunlight and from foods such as oily fish but not tinned tuna as the oil has been removed, eggs, butter, fortified fat spreads and some fortified breakfast cereals. But it's difficult to get enough from food alone.

DofH recommends 300 to 400IU (7.5 to 10mcg) of vitamin D for breastfed infants over 6months and in those taking less than 500ml infant formula per day and all 1 to 5 year olds.

Calcium is found in breast milk, infant formula, dairy products - milk, yoghurt, cheese, carrot juice, goat's milk/cheese, green leafy vegetables, tinned salmon and sardines eaten with the soft bones, soya/tofu, sesame, almonds, dried apricots, oranges, bread.

Iron is found in beef, lamb, beans and peas, lentils, leafy green vegetables, pumpkin seeds, parsley, almonds, cashews, nuts (as nut butters), dried apricots, fortified cereals and is better absorbed when taken with Vitamin C i.e. a piece of fruit.

Approximate milk amounts when weaning –

6months 900ml per day dropping to 500-600ml per day once weaned – remember yoghurts, custards and milky breakfasts can make this up if the baby doesn't want to drink all this.

Portion sizes for baby

Babies 6 to 12 months need about 700 to 1000 calories per day

PORTION SIZE for 10-12 month olds for 1 day (865kcal) =

- 1 Weetabix & milk
- Small banana
- Oatcake with butter, cheese cubes, small yoghurt
- Bread stick, sliced apple
- Potato, chicken and broccoli
- Plus their milk (500-600ml) and water from a cup

TODDLERS

- Need a diet higher in fat and lower in fibre than recommended for over 5's and adults
- Offer 3 toddler sized meals and 2/3 nutritious snacks per day
- 6-8 drinks for adequate hydration and to decrease constipation occurrence
- Eat in groups/with family and praise when they eat well
- Milk (full fat) 120mls x 3 times a day (more can suppress appetite)
- Follow on milk should only be considered if a health professional suggests it and they are not eating well

Fussy Eaters

Why?

- Independence
- Appearance
- Colour
- Texture
- Flavour
- Unfamiliarity – it can take 9 to 15 tastes of a food before we like its taste or texture from 6 to 12 months babies are willing to try new tastes and textures; this allows them to learn that the foods they like are safe as you are eating them as well.
- Over 12 months old they become wary of trying new foods, just in case it is poisonous. They may be learning from others including 'fussy' adults or siblings.

What to do

- Establish healthy eating patterns from an early age i.e. at the table with cutlery.
- Put toys away and turn off television
- Get child to set table
- Buy their own plates
- Get them involved – take them to the supermarket/help them grow their own vegetables and pick them, name them and help cook the food
- Eat with children where you can, even if it's only a small amount. It's a good time to chat and talk about the day's events
- Provide variety, but not too many new foods at once
- Encourage children to cut up food thus slowing down eating/chewing/digestion
- Don't pile food on plate – separate each food stuff
- Offer smaller portions at first and offer finger foods as often as possible
- Don't force child to eat or finish plate – finish a meal within 20 minutes
- Watch fluid intake especially milk, give water
- Develop a routine of 3 meals and 2 snacks per day
- Offer 2 courses at meals – one savoury and one sweet
- Try 'theme' days – sausage and mash Saturdays, meatball Mondays or name the dish.
- Continue with the soft foods and gradually introduce slightly more solid foods in small amounts.
- Avoid using food as a reward – go to the park instead/play a game
- Have a tea party, invite friends over, they will often eat if other children are around.
- Give praise, but never be angry
- Try not to get anxious over what your child eats, they will pick up on your anxiety and it could make the situation worse.
- If the child is underweight or you are concerned contact your health visitor or doctor.

Nutritional Snack Ideas

- Make your own fresh fruit lollies
- Natural yoghurt poured over fruit
- Make plain popcorn
- Chunky cheese/fruit/veg skewers
- Home-made fruit smoothies add yoghurt
- Vegetable batons and home-made dips or cottage cheese
- Cheese cut into small chunks
- Make your own cakes – fruit scones or muffins, banana and raisin loaf, carrot
- Cake or apple flap jacks

Books/Websites

To watch the DVD again – East Lothian Weaning on YouTube

Net Mums- www.netmums.com

Kids and Nutrition- www.kidsandnutrition.co.uk

The Vegetarian Society – www.vegsoc.org

Premature Babies – weaning advice can also be found at Bliss

Also goggle ‘baby lead weaning’ to find videos.

Gill Rapley – Baby Lead Weaning

Lucy Burney – Optimum Nutrition for babies and young children

NHS- Fun First Foods

