



# Baby Nosh!

A five-minute guide to introducing your baby to food

# The meaning of weaning

There comes a time when a baby needs more nourishment than breast milk or infant formula alone can provide.

**Government guidelines** strongly encourage mothers to breastfeed their baby exclusively (i.e. offer only breast milk) for the **first six months** of life.



**Weaning** is the process of introducing a baby to foods other than milk. There is more to learning to eat than meets the eye – so introduce your baby gradually to a wide range of different tastes and textures.

What and when you introduce different foods is important and this booklet guides you through the stages of weaning.

## When is it best to start?

Around six months is the best age to start weaning your baby. If you decide to introduce your baby to solid food before six months, there are some foods you should avoid because they are linked to allergy or may make your baby ill (see page 5). Ask your health visitor for advice.

## Not too late

Delaying weaning beyond six months may mean that your baby misses out on important nutrients such as vitamins and iron.

## Not too soon

Don't be tempted to rush your baby into taking solids too soon as their body will not be ready to cope with food other than breast milk or infant formula. Let your baby guide you. For instance, if they can stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady, if they can look at the food, pick it up and put it in their mouth all by themselves and if they swallow rather than push food back out, your baby is ready to be weaned.

## Pre-term babies

Babies born prematurely may be ready for weaning at different times. Ask your health visitor for advice about what's best for your baby.

# How to start weaning!

Don't leave meals until your baby is too hungry or tired to eat, for example offer food during a milk feed. Start slowly – offer a few plastic teaspoons of:



**cereal** (not wheat-based before 6 months) mixed with breast milk or infant formula e.g. maize, baby rice or puréed cooked rice  
or



**cooked fruit or vegetables, puréed or mashed or as soft cooked sticks** (all cooled before eating) e.g. potato, yam, parsnip, apple or pear  
or



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

Go at your baby's pace.

Eat together. Babies copy their parents and other children so you can help them by showing them that you eat healthy foods.

Let your baby enjoy touching and holding the food.

Make sure your baby is well-supported in a sitting position.

# What next?



Gradually introduce more new foods (see page 12).



Slowly increase the amount of solid food offered – try to match the portion size to your baby's appetite.



Gradually increase the number of solid food feeds from one, to two and then to three a day.



Whole milk yogurt and fromage frais can be introduced.



Go for variety – if they are not interested in the food, try again as babies sometimes take their time getting used to different foods. So offer a small amount, lots and lots of times.



Gradually introduce more texture by offering foods with soft lumps and finger foods; if you delay giving lumps or finger foods you may find that your baby refuses to eat lumpy foods as they get older.



Introduce a cup from around six months and offer sips of water with meals. Using an open cup or a free-flow cup (with no valve) will help your

baby learn to sip and is better for your baby's teeth. By the time your baby is one, they should have stopped using bottles with teats.

Continue to give your baby breast milk or infant formula. **Always offer food on a spoon – never add it to a bottle.**

# nosh

to Take Care with!

## Foods linked to allergy

**From six months** onwards, foods that can cause allergies such as eggs, wheat, peanuts, nuts, seeds, fish, shellfish, milk and dairy foods (such as yogurt and cheese) and foods containing these ingredients can be introduced one at a time with a day or two in between so you can spot any reaction. If your child is at risk of peanut allergy (has already been diagnosed with or there is a family history of any allergy) you should speak to your healthcare professional before introducing foods containing peanuts.

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

## Foods that could cause choking

Large chunks of hard foods (for example, carrots and apples), foods with skin such as sausages, bones and small round foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes can cause choking. Peel and lightly cook hard fruits and vegetables, cut small round foods in half, and take care to remove any stones or pips and all skin and bones before feeding any foods to your baby.

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 Tummies

## Foods to Avoid

**Nuts:** Whole nuts should not be given to children under 5 years due to risk of choking.

**Salt:** Do not add salt to your baby's food or use stock cubes or gravy, as these are often high in salt. Too much salt is not good for your baby. Always check food labels.

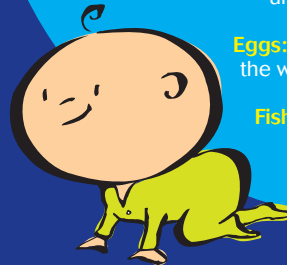
**Sugar:** Your baby does not need added sugar. Avoiding sugary snacks and drinks will help prevent tooth decay.

**Honey:** Do not introduce before 1 year.

**Low-fat foods:** Do not introduce before 2 years – fat is an important source of energy and some vitamins for babies and young children. For example do not give low-fat yogurt or skimmed milk, but instead give whole milk yogurt and use whole milk in cooking or to mix with food. Remember, cows' milk should not be given as a main drink until your baby is one year old.

**Eggs:** Avoid raw eggs and always make sure the whites and yolks are cooked until firm.

**Fish:** Avoid raw shellfish and shark, swordfish and marlin



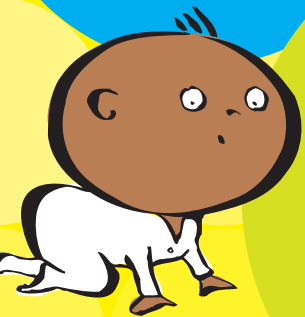
# Safe Wosh!

**Top tips –**  
for keeping baby food safe

- Keep all utensils and surfaces really clean.
- Wash your hands and your baby's hands before meals.
- Thoroughly wash and dry all bowls and spoons for feeding.
- Throw away half-eaten food.
- When heating up food, always stir it well.
- Cooked food should not be reheated more than once.
- Check the temperature before offering food to a baby.

## 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 using defrost settings on the microwave.
- Reheat food thoroughly until hot all the way through.
- But remember to let food cool down before offering it to your baby.



# Top tips

weaning – first foods



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

Never leave your baby alone with a bottle or give a bottle to help with sleep as it could cause choking as well as damage teeth.

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

# Perfect purées and Marvellous Mashes

## Soft food

Prepare soft food (e.g. banana, mango, melon and avocado) by mashing it with a fork.

## Cooked vegetables

Vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, parsnips and broccoli need to be cooked before being mashed or puréed.

Peel off any skin, and then rinse and chop the vegetables into small pieces. Steam or boil in a pan until soft (about 10 to 15 minutes). Mash with a fork or potato masher.

## Cooked fruit

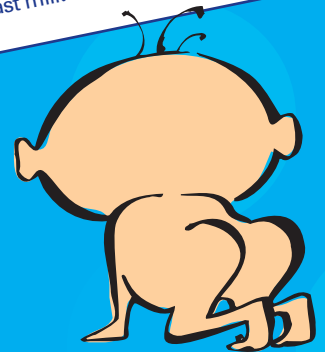
Hard fruits such as apples need cooking before being mashed and puréed.

Peel, core, rinse and chop the fruit into small pieces. Place in a saucepan with two tablespoons of water and cover with a lid. Cook over a low heat until the fruit is soft (about 5 to 10 minutes) then mash.

**Don't add sugar or salt to baby food.**

To make a purée thinner, add breast milk or infant formula.

For a smooth purée (no lumps) push mashed foods through a sieve or use a hand-held blender.



# Menu planner

for weaning - my first foods

	Start with	Move on to	Increase to	Increase tastes and textures
<b>Morning</b>	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula Baby rice*	Breast milk or infant formula Baby rice*	Breast milk or infant formula Mashed banana and toast fingers
<b>Mid-morning</b>	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula
<b>Lunch</b>	Baby rice* Breast milk or infant formula	Fruit or vegetable purée or mash** Breast milk or infant formula	Soft cooked vegetable mashed or as finger food** Breast milk or infant formula	Mashed fish (well-cooked, with no bones) Soft cooked sticks of sweet potato Soft, peeled fruit mashed or as finger food** with fromage frais Breast milk or infant formula
<b>Mid-afternoon</b>	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula
<b>Evening</b>	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula	Soft, peeled fruit mashed or as finger food** Breast milk or infant formula	Soft, cooked pieces of chicken Soft cooked vegetable mashed or as finger food** Rice Breast milk or infant formula

\* Mixed with breast milk or infant formula before 6 months. From 6 months whole cows' milk may be added to cereal and used in small amounts in cooking, but it is not suitable as a drink until one year.

\*\* See page 3 for suggestions

## Important

- Your baby should continue to consume breast milk or infant formula as required throughout the day.
- Water should be offered with all meals.
- Start by offering foods at a time that suits you both.
- The menu planner is intended as a guide for first foods to try.
- Every baby is an individual and babies develop at different rates. Once your baby has accepted the first simple foods, a greater variety of tastes and textures should be introduced.
- The idea is to gradually increase the amount and variety of food your baby eats until they can eventually eat the same as the rest of the family, but in smaller portions and with no added sugar or salt. Encouraging a variety of foods will ensure they don't miss out on any essential nutrients.
- From 6 month give your baby a variety of iron providing foods (see page 22).
- Other foods to try: soft cooked meat, mashed fish (check for bones), pasta, noodles, lentils, toast, pieces of chapatti, mashed hard boiled eggs, and whole milk dairy products like yogurt or custard.

# Weaning

from eight - nine months and over



**Gradually** in this time your baby will move towards eating three meals a day with the family.



Your baby will be having a mixture of **soft finger foods**, **mashed** and **chopped** foods.



Slowly introduce a wider range of foods from all food groups listed below.

**Continue** to offer breast milk or infant formula throughout the day.

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

**Starchy foods** like bread, rice, pasta and potatoes

**Fruit and vegetables**

**Meat, fish** (well-cooked, no bones), well-cooked eggs, pulses (peas, beans or lentils e.g. dahl)

**Whole milk and dairy products.** Whole milk can be used in cooking or mixed in small amounts with foods, however should not be given as a main drink until your baby is one year old.

# Finger Foods



Let your baby feed themselves with their **fingers**. This helps them get familiar with different types of food.



**As a guide**, the best finger foods are foods that can be cut into pieces that are big enough for your baby to hold in their fist, and stick out the top of it.



Pieces about the size of your own finger work well.

*Some Finger foods to try:*

- toast
- cooked green beans
- cooked carrots, yam, sweet potato
- sticks or cubes of hard cheese
- peeled ripe banana
- peeled ripe pear
- cooked pasta shapes
- bread sticks.

Note: **Hard** finger foods such as raw carrot or unripened pear are **unsuitable**.



# Menu planner

for weaning - my first family meals

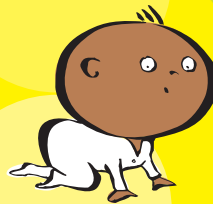
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
<b>Morning</b>	Breast milk or infant formula  Porridge or unsweetened cereal*  Pieces of ripe peeled pear (finger food)	Breast milk or infant formula  Wholewheat biscuit cereal*  Pieces of melon (finger food)	Breast milk or infant formula  Mashed banana and toast fingers (finger food)
<b>Lunch</b>	Baked beans (reduced salt and sugar)  Toast fingers (finger food)  Plain fromage frais with stewed apple  Breast milk or infant formula	Scrambled egg (well-cooked) with toast, chapatti or pitta bread  Cucumber sticks (finger food)  Soft, ripe peeled peach (finger food)  Breast milk or infant formula	Macaroni cheese  Green beans (finger food)  Semolina with strawberries  Breast milk or infant formula
<b>Tea</b>	Fish, broccoli and mashed potato  Cooked carrot sticks (finger food)  Chopped grapes (finger food)	Minced lamb and vegetable casserole with rice  Mixed berries and plain yogurt	Lentil and vegetable bake  Red pepper slices (finger food)  Small cup of orange juice (diluted)
<b>Evening</b>	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula	Breast milk or infant formula

\* Mixed with either breast milk, whole cows' milk or infant formula

**Some babies** will eat more than others and so the menu planner is intended as a guide for food choice and does not give portion sizes.

Your baby should continue to consume breast milk or infant formula as required throughout the day.

Water should be offered with all meals



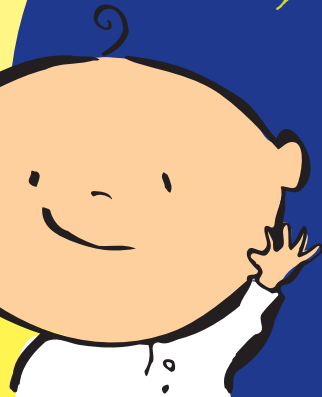
# Snack Attack

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
- Sticks or cubes of hard cheese
- Pitta or chapatti fingers
- Unsalted rice cakes
- Toasted bagel pieces
- Toast fingers with cheese spread.



# Feeding a one-year-old



Your baby can join in with the family by eating three 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 and give your child:

- **Starchy foods** – like potatoes, pasta, rice, bread - at each meal and as some snacks
- **A variety of protein** – 2 servings of meat, fish or alternative protein sources (such as beans and lentils) or 2 or 3 servings of alternative protein sources for vegetarian or vegan children
- **Fruit and vegetables** – encourage your child to try lots of different fruits and veg. Why not add grated apple, banana or raisins to breakfast cereal or carrots or red pepper to pasta sauces
- **About 3 serving of milk and dairy a day** – as a drink, in milk-based dishes or as cheese, yogurt or fromage frais.

# Milky matters

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

If your baby is six months or older, is breastfed and/or drinking less than 500mls of formula milk each day give them vitamin drops containing vitamins A, C and D. Your GP or health visitor can advise you on amounts. Vitamin drops are available under the Healthy Start scheme.

Rice, oat or almond drinks or goats' and sheep's milk are **not suitable as drinks for babies under a year old**

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

Although you should not give your baby whole cows' milk to drink until one year, you can use it in cooking from six months.

**Only breast milk or infant formula should be given as a main drink for under-ones. As babies start to eat more solid food they will want less and you can even drop a milk feed altogether.**

# Your questions answered

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

Beware, these drinks contain sugars which cause tooth decay. 'Baby drinks' and squash are not suitable for babies.

Fruit juice can be given after six months, but to prevent damage to the teeth 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.

The best drinks to give between meals are breast milk 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.

## 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. Home-made 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.

## How can I make sure my baby gets enough iron?

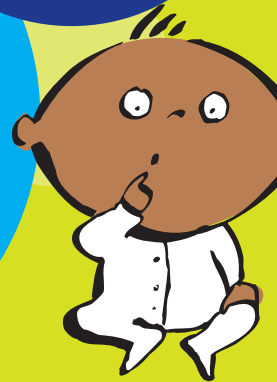
Babies are born with a store of iron that will last about six months. After that they need to get iron from their food. Give your baby some red meat e.g. beef, some dark poultry meat such as thigh or leg meat, some eggs and pulses e.g. lentils and oily fish e.g. sardines. Giving these foods alongside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

## 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.

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

No, these are not suitable drinks for babies under one year because they don't contain the nutrients that babies need.



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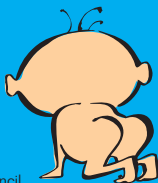
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The  
**Dairy Council**

Tel 020 7025 0569  
[info@dairycouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@dairycouncil.org.uk)

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