



Fun **First** Foods

An easy guide to introducing solid foods

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UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

UNICEF is the world's leading children's charity. The UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative provides training and assessment for hospitals and community health services. This helps professionals to improve the standard of care, information and support they give to parents about feeding and building relationships with their baby. Visit www.babyfriendly.org.uk

NHS Health Scotland wishes to thank those who have contributed to this resource. **Fun First Foods** has been endorsed by the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative.

Published by NHS Health Scotland

1 South Gyle Crescent
Edinburgh EH12 9EB

© NHS Health Scotland 2018
First published 2010

ISBN: 978-1-84485-483-7

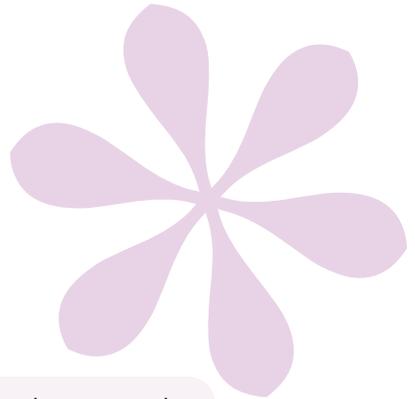
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For the sake of consistency we have used 'she' or 'her' throughout the booklet.



How this booklet will help you

As a parent, you want the best start for your baby. What your baby eats and drinks is important for her health now and in the future.

The information in this booklet may be quite different from what you have read before, or from what your friends and family may tell you. New research is always being carried out into feeding babies and the information and advice in this leaflet is based on the most recent findings. It will help your baby to get the best possible start.

What is weaning?

Weaning means introducing a variety of foods gradually to your baby alongside breast milk or infant formula until she is eating the same healthy foods as the rest of the family. Sometimes this is called 'starting solids'.

If you are breastfeeding, you should continue to give your baby breast milk alongside solid food. This will continue to benefit you both. If you are formula feeding, continue with first milk alongside solids. For the first nine months the majority of your baby's nutrition comes from breast or formula milk.

The number of feeds will reduce as she takes more food. Your baby is likely to let you know when she wants to stop breast or formula feeding.





When is the best time to introduce solid foods?

Introducing solid food is an important milestone in a baby's development much like walking and talking. It helps your baby learn about textures, flavours and eating together. Health experts now recommend that babies should start eating solid foods from around the age of six months. For the first six months, all the nourishment your baby needs comes from breast milk (or infant formula), but after six months she will need more nutrients than milk alone can provide, for example, iron. You should aim to gradually increase the variety and amount of solid foods so that, by 12 months, food rather than breast milk or infant formula is the main part of her diet. This will help your baby to grow and develop properly.

What are the advantages of weaning at six months?

Before six months your baby's immune and digestive system and kidneys are still developing. Waiting until six months will make sure these systems are developed enough to cope with solid foods. Weaning too early may impact on your baby's long-term health. Weaning is easier at six months because you can use soft finger foods or mashed foods. There is no need to puree. Also, bowls and spoons do not need to be sterilised.

What about bigger babies – won't they need solid food earlier?

It doesn't really matter what weight your baby was at birth – the digestive system, immune system and kidneys of babies develop at the same rate regardless of their weight. There's no need to introduce solid food earlier just because your baby weighs more than other babies of her age. If she seems particularly hungry at any time, she may be having a growth spurt and extra breastfeeding or infant formula will be enough to meet her needs. Even if your baby is not sleeping through the night when she had been previously, there is no evidence to suggest that weaning earlier will help. If you have any concerns, discuss them with your health visitor.

My older sister weaned her children at four months and they're fine – why can't I?

Weaning from four months was the advice given for a number of years, but the current guidance of around six months is supported by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition and the Scottish Government. You may not see an immediate difference in your baby's health compared to other babies that are weaned earlier, but you can be confident that you are giving your baby the best chance to have good health throughout her life.

If you choose to wean for medical reasons before six months, there are a number of foods which should be avoided. Please see page 26 for a list of these foods.



Premature babies

If your baby was born prematurely, ask your paediatrician, health visitor or paediatric dietitian for advice about what is best for your baby.

How do I know when my baby is ready to start solid foods?

Every baby is different but there are some signs that your baby is ready to move on to solid foods. These are:

- * she can stay in a sitting position, she can hold her head steady
- * she can reach out and grab things accurately; for example, she may look at a toy, pick it up and bring it to her mouth by herself
- * If your baby is around six months and the signs above are there, you can try offering a spoonful of soft food to see how she copes. Babies who are not ready will push their food back out so they have more on their face than in their mouths. Try offering a spoonful again in a day or two and wait until she shows signs of swallowing.

If your baby is looked after by someone else during the day, e.g. a grandparent, childminder or nursery, this should not affect how you wean your baby. You should discuss your feeding routine with them to ensure they do the same thing as you.

Remember, this booklet has the most up-to-date information on weaning. You may want to share it with the person who is helping to look after your baby.

What to eat?

Weaning is a time for learning about foods and getting used to eating.

Your baby will learn that:

- * foods come in different colours, flavours and textures
 - * some foods are eaten from a spoon, while other foods can be held and eaten with her hands
 - * some drinks come from a cup.
- * You should continue with breastfeeding or formula feeding (whey-based first milk) while gradually introducing solid foods. You should offer your baby solid foods when she is relaxed and happy. At first, this might be after her usual feeds.

There are foods that we should eat every day from the following five food groups:

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

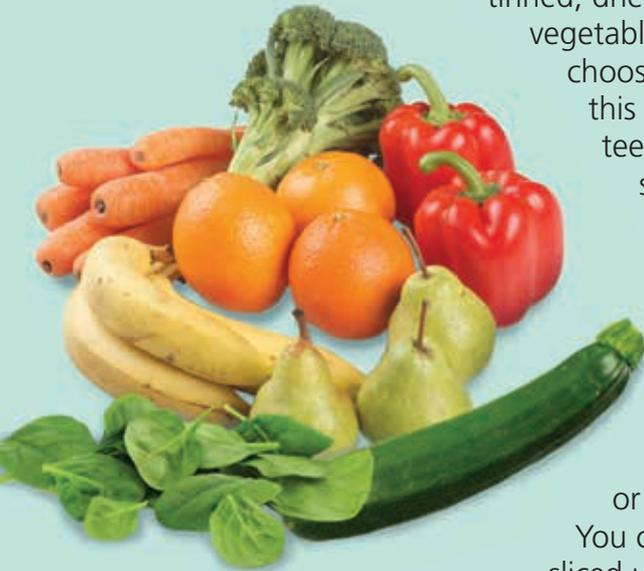
These foods are important sources of energy, vitamins and minerals and should be a major part of your baby's diet. This group also includes low-sugar (plain) breakfast cereals, sweet potatoes, porridge, noodles, couscous, yams, plantains and chapattis.





Fruits and vegetables

These are a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals that are essential for your baby's health. They should also be a major part of your baby's diet. You can use fresh, tinned, dried and frozen fruit, and vegetables. If you buy tinned fruit, choose fruit in natural juice as this is better for your baby's teeth than tinned fruit in syrup. If you buy tinned vegetables, buy those that don't have any added salt.



Soft fruits and vegetables are ideal first foods. You could try mashing a banana, pear or cooked carrot or broccoli.

You could also offer them sliced up as finger foods.

To reduce the risk of choking:

- * remove any stones or pips before serving
- * chop small fruits and vegetables, like cherry tomatoes and grapes, into four equal pieces
- * cut large fruits into slices rather than chunks.



To encourage your baby to eat fruits and vegetables, eat them yourself. A baby loves to copy her parents.

Meat, fish, eggs, beans, nuts and other non-dairy sources of protein



These foods are important for your baby's growth and development and include lean meat, white fish, oily fish (for example, fresh mackerel, salmon and tinned sardines), chicken, eggs, nuts, particularly peanuts, and pulses (beans, peas, lentils and so on). Quorn™ and tofu are also good sources of protein. Avoid processed meats, such as bacon or sausages, as they are high in salt.

Pasteurised full-fat milk and dairy food

These foods contain calcium which is needed for strong bones and teeth. They also provide energy, protein, vitamins and minerals for your baby. Dairy foods are made from milk, e.g. cheese and yogurt. Make sure you use pasteurised full-fat dairy products such as full-fat plain yogurt, full-fat fromage frais and pasteurised full-fat cow's milk when cooking, e.g., cheese sauce, custard, rice pudding and semolina.



Oils and spreads

Babies up to age 2 have smaller tummies compared to older children and adults. They need foods that are high in energy so need more fat in their diets. After that they can gradually move to a lower-fat diet, the same as the rest of the family. You can use vegetable oils such as olive or sunflower oil for cooking, and vegetable margarine (e.g. sunflower) on bread or toast fingers.



Food safety

- * Wash your hands before preparing food and wash your baby's hands before she eats.
- * Make sure the area where the food will be prepared is clean. Keep pets away from this area.
- * Clean any tabletops with a clean cloth before and after feeding. Wash all bowls, spoons, feeding cups and any containers used in hot soapy water. You can use a dishwasher.
- * All fruits and vegetables should be washed thoroughly before use. This includes pre-packed items.
- * Make sure all meat is properly cooked. This is especially important for chicken and minced meat.
- * Make sure you stir and test any heated food before giving it to your baby.
- * Make sure you don't use food past its use-by date. Follow the instructions on the food labels.
- * Food that you have prepared should be kept chilled in a fridge (below 5°C) and eaten within two days.
- * Frozen food should be thoroughly defrosted before reheating and do not refreeze any leftover food.
- * When reheating food, it should be heated until it is steaming hot all the way through and then cooled before offering it to your baby. Heat only the amount of food you need. Throw away any uneaten heated food.
- * Eggs should be stamped with the British Lion stamp. If an egg has no British Lion stamp then it should be fully cooked.

Getting started

How to start

Health experts now recommend that babies should start eating solid foods from around the age of six months, when they show signs of being ready (see page 5). Choose a time of day when you and your baby are relaxed. There is no right way, just the way that suits you and your baby. After a couple of weeks you will find a pattern that suits you both. You will need a bib for your baby, a soft spoon and a bowl (these should be clean but do not need to be sterilised if your baby is over six months old). Your baby may prefer to pick up finger foods directly from a clean tabletop or tray.

What to expect

Eating is fun and your baby will learn this too! Try not to worry too much about mess. Your baby may spit food out the first couple of times – this is quite normal, just wait and try another day. Some babies take to it quickly, some take longer. You may need to offer a new food lots of times before it is accepted. Many babies are slow to eat at the beginning; be patient and let her take it at her own pace.

Remember: Your baby can pick up how you are feeling. If you are calm your baby is more likely to relax.



First foods

Try the following suggestions for first foods:

- * Use mashed-up healthy family foods where possible – do not add any sugar or salt.
- * Mashed cooked vegetables such as carrot, parsnip, turnip, broccoli, courgette or cauliflower.
- * Mashed fruit such as banana, stewed apple or pear.
- * Small pieces of soft fruit or cooked vegetables such as melon or carrot.
- * Toast, bread, pitta bread or chapatti.
- * Pasteurised cheese, scrambled eggs or chunks of cooked fish which she can pick up (be careful to remove all bones from cooked fish).
- * Low-salt peanut butter – but talk to your health visitor or doctor if there is a nut allergy family history or your baby already has eczema. If you are worried about allergies in your family, please see page 28 and 29.
- * Plain baby rice or other cereal mixed with her usual feed (expressed breast milk or formula) – always in a bowl, not in her bottle. If your baby is six months or over, pasteurised full-fat cow's milk can be used to mix with cereal, but not to drink. There is further information on drinks on page 22.



Mashed banana

Some of these foods are not recommended until your baby is six months old. If you have decided to wean your baby before six months, there is more information on page 26.

How often and how much?

- * Start with a small amount of food at one meal each day, either mashed or finger food, and gradually increase the amount.
- * Respond to your baby's needs by feeding her when she is hungry and stopping when she is full, for example, when she closes her mouth or turns her head away.
- * Don't forget that breast milk or infant formula is still the most important part of her diet until 9 months of age and at first she will continue to drink her usual amount.
- * Gradually increase the amount.
- * Be guided by your baby's appetite – for example, she may want a few teaspoons of well-mashed food or a few pieces of finger food.
- * Encourage your baby to feed herself using her fingers as soon as she shows interest.
- * Offer her a range of foods and textures, particularly vegetables and fruit.
- * Don't force her to take the food – if she doesn't seem to want it, try again later.

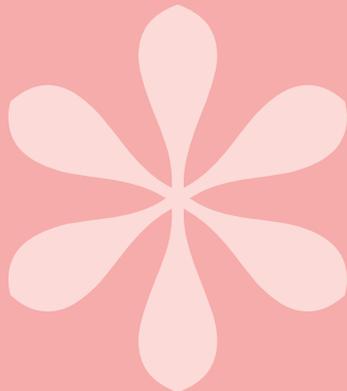


- * Do not add sugar or salt to foods for your baby. Salt can overload a young baby's kidneys. Sugar can harm your baby's teeth and does not contain the important nutrients your baby needs.
- * Artificial sweeteners are not suitable for babies and young children. If your baby is sharing family foods, the whole family will benefit from eating less salt and sugar too. See page 19 for more about family meals.
- * Do not put any foods in your baby's bottle as she will feel full, take less feed, and may not receive all the nourishment she needs.

Never leave your baby alone while eating in case she chokes.



When starting solids, get your baby comfortable sitting up and facing straight forward. A highchair will ensure she is well supported and less likely to choke. She will also be able to use her fingers to pick up her food more easily.





Moving on

Once your baby is used to eating a few foods, it's time to move on to:

- * More meals – moving from food at one meal a day to food at two and three meals a day. By 12 months she will probably have three meals and two additional snacks in between.
- * More foods – giving her food from each of the food groups (see page 6).
- * More texture – from mashed to lumps and from lumps to minced foods, moving from soft finger foods to firmer finger foods. Mixing a new food with a familiar one, such as adding cooked lentils to mashed carrot or parsnips, may make this easier.
- * More nutrients – as your baby's need for iron and other important nutrients increases. There is further information on page 17.
- * More food experiences – drinking from a cup and feeding herself with a wider range of finger foods.

This process should be done at your baby's own pace. Some babies may only want a few spoonfuls or a few mouthfuls of finger foods. Allow your baby to choose how much and what she wants to eat from what you offer but do not spend longer than 20 minutes feeding in a highchair.



More meals

When your baby seems ready, progress from offering solid food once a day to two and three times a day. Solid foods should be offered to your baby alongside her usual feed. You may wish to offer her tap water in a cup with meals.

Remember that all babies are different. Your baby will let you know how much she wants to eat and this may vary from day to day. For some, this is what a typical day's meals may look like for a 10 to 12-month-old baby:

Breakfast	Low-sugar cereal (e.g. wheat biscuits, plain cooled hot oat cereal) with breast milk, infant formula or pasteurised full-fat cow's milk (if she is six months and over) Fruit – soft fruit pieces
Lunch	Minced or mashed food and finger foods, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• scrambled eggs or baked beans with toast slices• or homemade carrot soup with bread fingers• or pasta with tomato and vegetable sauce• and/or chopped/mashed banana and full-fat plain yogurt.
Dinner	Minced or mashed food and finger foods, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• tuna and pasta (in oil or water) with sweetcorn• or mashed potato with cheese and broccoli• or minced meat/lentils with mashed potatoes and carrots• and/or some tangerine segments, tinned in juice or fresh.

Breast or infant formula milk is still the main source of nutrients in the first 9 months and after that your baby will gradually start to enjoy other nutritious solid foods.



As the amount of food your baby eats increases, she will need less of her usual milk. However, you should continue to breastfeed for as long as you wish or she should drink about 500–600 mls of infant formula a day until she is 12 months old.

More texture

It's good to give your baby food with lumps. Food comes in different textures and these foods will help encourage her to chew. Try finger foods such as cooked carrot sticks, or small pieces of crust or toast.

Vitamins:

- * Everyone in the population, including babies and children, needs to take a supplement of vitamin D.
- * All infants should be given vitamin drops with vitamin D from soon after birth unless they are being given 500 ml of formula milk or more a day.
- * If you qualify for Healthy Start you should receive these vitamin drops free of charge.

You can get more information about Healthy Start and vitamins from your health visitor or at

www.healthystart.nhs.uk



Iron

Iron is essential for your baby's development and babies need additional iron in their diet as they get older. Give iron-rich foods regularly such as:

- * All meat, canned fish, or eggs. Use minced meat for dishes such as shepherd's pie (see recipe section). Liver contains lots of iron but it shouldn't be eaten more than once a week as it contains too much vitamin A.
- * Low-sugar breakfast cereals with added iron. Lentils, beans and green vegetables contain some iron too. Too much fibre for babies and toddlers under the age of 2 can be too filling for their small tummies. This can reduce their appetite for milk and food. So you should vary the type of bread and cereal you offer your baby and don't give her too much wholemeal bread.
- * Follow-on formulas are marketed as a good source of iron but experts agree that they provide no benefit and are not necessary.

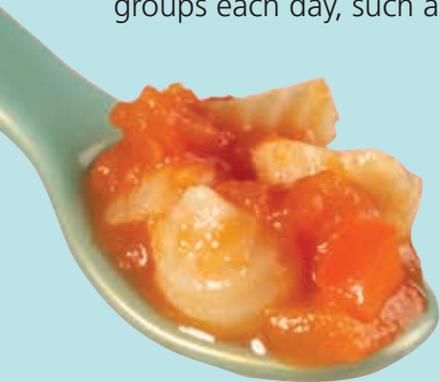


Avoid giving your baby squashes, fruit drinks, chocolate, sweets, crisps and corn snacks, deep fried foods, chocolate coated biscuits, pastries, tea and coffee. These tend to be high in fat, sugar and salt, and low in vitamins.



Mini meals

As your baby approaches her first birthday you can expect her to be eating a wide range of different foods from all the food groups each day, such as:



Simple tomato and vegetable sauce

- * 3-4 servings of a wide range of fruit and vegetables every day, including at least 5 or more different fruit and vegetables
- * 3-4 servings of starchy food each day, e.g. potatoes, bread, rice
- * 2 servings of protein, e.g. meat, fish, eggs, pulses
- * 2-3 servings of pasteurised dairy products, e.g. milky pudding, yogurt, cheese.

Give eggs and peanut butter several times a week to prevent allergy.

As your baby gets older she may need a snack between meals, such as:



- * small peanut butter sandwiches
- * cucumber sticks or fruit slices
- * bread with pasteurised cheese or houmous.

Remember to let your baby choose how much and what she wants to eat from what you offer.

Joining in with the family

Eating with your baby makes her feel more included, helps her develop social skills and encourages her to get into good habits from a young age. She may be slower and make a mess but try to be patient. Family meals together without the distraction of TV help encourage good eating habits.

- * Try to organise mealtimes for the same time every day – she will then know what to expect and is more likely to eat happily.
- * Cook something all the family can eat.
- * Don't add any salt or sugar while cooking – you will all benefit from having less salt and sugar.
- * Avoid using ready-made meals and food products which have high salt and sugar content.
- * Encourage her to feed herself.
- * Smile and talk to your baby.
- * Babies copy their parents' eating habits so remember to set a good example.



Keep foods high in sugar to a minimum and offer them rarely. Babies should only be offered foods containing sugar as part of a main meal, not between meals. Do not use food as a punishment or reward.

Using ready-made baby foods

It can sometimes be convenient to use jars or packets of baby food occasionally but don't let them replace home-made foods. Home-made foods can offer your baby more variety in texture and will encourage her to accept lumps.

If you buy baby foods:

- * Choose foods where the label says they do not contain added sugars. Also look out for any of the following words on the label, all of which are forms of sugar: honey, sucrose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, fructose, hydrolysed starch, corn or maize syrup, molasses, raw/brown sugar, treacle, and concentrated fruit juice. Remember honey should not be given to your baby until they are 12 months old.
- * Make sure the foods are within their use-by date and that the seal has not been broken.
- * Only heat up the amount you need and throw away any food your baby doesn't eat. Do not let babies put nozzles of baby pouches in their mouths.
- * Sucking from a pouch of pureed food encourages food and drink to be drawn between the front teeth making them more at risk of tooth decay. If you use food pouches remember to empty the contents of the pouch into a bowl and feed your child with a spoon.
- * Bought baby foods tend to be much more expensive than making your own food.
- * Some baby foods may say 'suitable from four months' on the label but health experts agree that around six months is the safest age to start to introduce solids.

Are there any foods I shouldn't give?

- * Honey, salt and sugar should be avoided until 12 months of age.
- * Whole nuts, including peanuts, should be avoided until 5 years of age as there is a risk of choking (finely chopped peanuts are okay – see page 29 for further advice on peanuts).
- * Shark, marlin and swordfish should be avoided until 16 years of age. This is due to the levels of mercury in these fish, which affects a baby's growing nervous system. Other fish and shellfish are suitable after six months of age, but raw shellfish shouldn't be given to babies because it increases their risk of getting food poisoning.
- * It is not a good idea to give low-fat, low-calorie or high-fibre foods to babies because they need foods that provide lots of calories and nutrients in a small amount of food, rather than bulky high-fibre foods.
- * Babies and children should not have raw, unpasteurised milk and dairy products such as cheese made from unpasteurised milk due to the increased risk of food poisoning.

How can I get my baby to try new foods? Try, try and try again is the best way. The more they try new foods and the more they see the rest of the family eating it, the more likely they are to eat it!





What can my baby drink?



Milk

- * Breast or formula milk should be your baby's main food until around 9 months. Breastfeeding will benefit you and your baby for as long as you choose to continue. Breast milk changes as your baby grows to adapt to her needs.
- * Follow-on formula which is marketed for babies over six months is not recommended or needed. First formula milk (whey-based formula) is the best type of formula for your baby until she is 12 months old.
- * For formula fed infants, cow's milk (full-fat and pasteurised milk only) should be the main drink after 12 months. See page 24 for more information on other milks. After six months you can also use pasteurised full-fat cow's milk for mixing in cereal or for cooking, e.g. in sauces and puddings, and you can also give products made from pasteurised full-fat cow's milk, e.g. yogurt and fromage frais. Semi-skimmed, skimmed and 1% milk is not suitable for babies and young children under the age of 2.

Fresh fruit juices are a good source of vitamin C but contain natural sugars that can cause tooth decay. They are also acidic and acidic drinks may erode your baby's teeth. Fruit juices should therefore be given in small amounts (no more than half a cup), be unsweetened and diluted (one part juice to one part water). They should be given at meal times only in a free-flow cup, not a feeding bottle.

Water is the best drink to give in addition to her normal feed and this is the only drink which is safe for teeth if given between meals. Use tap water as mineral, sweetened, flavoured or carbonated water can be too high in salt and minerals for babies. For babies under six months of age, tap water should be boiled and cooled first. See page 25 for information about private water supply.

Cups

From six months you should continue to breastfeed as normal, offering tap water in a cup with meals if you feel your baby needs it. If you are formula feeding, you can start to offer your baby tap water or her usual formula in a cup from six months. You may need to help your baby to hold the cup until she can do it herself.

Learning to drink from a cup can be messy but she needs to learn to sip, not suck. If the cup has a lid, make sure the water can drip out if turned upside down; this is known as a free-flow cup. Free-flow cups are given out as part of the Childsmile Programme. Non-spill (valve) cups encourage your baby to suck rather than sip and should be avoided. The sucking motion can indirectly lead to speech problems.

Drinks taken from a bottle are more likely to lead to dental problems because the fluid stays in the mouth longer than when sipping from a cup. Apart from when she is breastfeeding, aim to have your baby drinking **only** from a cup (and no longer using bottles) by her first birthday. Avoid giving her sweetened or acidic drinks (see page 24 – Drinks to avoid) which will harm her teeth.



Drinks to avoid

- * Soya-based infant formula should only be used on the advice of your paediatrician or paediatric dietitian. This is because of possible long-term side effects of soya-based formula and its sugar content. The sugars in soya milk can cause tooth decay, making it important for babies to drink from a fast-flow teat or a cup. Damage can be kept to a minimum if soya drinks are given at mealtimes only. Soya formula is not suitable as a bedtime drink. Other soya-based drinks should be avoided until your baby is 12 months old.
- * You should not give your baby cow's, goat's or sheep's milk as a drink before they are 12 months old as they do not have the right mix of nutrients for your baby, but you can use them in cooking as long as they are pasteurised full-fat milk. After 12 months, you can give them pasteurised whole (full-fat) milk as a drink alongside a healthy diet.
- * Sugary, diet or no added sugar fruit squashes, energy drinks and fizzy drinks are not suitable for babies or toddlers. They have few nutrients and can fill your baby up, meaning that she doesn't eat well. They are also damaging to teeth.
- * Flavoured milks and yogurt drinks contain added sugar and are not suitable for young children.
- * Baby fruit and herbal drinks are not suitable as they are usually sweetened.
- * Tea and coffee contain substances which prevent your baby absorbing some nutrients from food, act as stimulants, and have no nutritional value themselves. Don't give your baby tea or coffee even if diluted.



Remember: If your baby is well established on solids and wants a drink during the night, only give her plain tap water or breast milk.

Caring for her teeth: It is important that you clean your baby's teeth as soon as the first tooth appears. Use a soft toothbrush with a small head. For children under three years of age use a smear of fluoride toothpaste on a dry brush.

If you live in, or are visiting, a remote or rural area in Scotland and use a private water supply, you need to ensure it is well managed and protected from germ contamination. This advice is relevant for all ages, including children being weaned. If you are not certain that your private supply is adequately protected, all water (including that used to rinse fruit, vegetables or added to other food) should be boiled and cooled before use.

Information on which areas have private water supplies can be found on <http://dwqr.scot/private-supply/>

More information is available from the environmental health team of your local authority <http://dwqr.scot/media/20636/pws-local-authorities-contact-details-february-2016.pdf>





Foods to avoid if weaning before six months

Weaning before six months is not recommended. However, if you do start to give solids before six months, the following foods should be avoided (this includes the ingredients of ready-made baby foods):

- * foods that contain gluten like wheat, rye, barley and oats. These can be found in pasta, rusks, bread, flour and breakfast cereals containing gluten
 - * fish and shellfish (such as prawns)
 - * pasteurised dairy products (like cheese, fromage frais, custard, milk sauces and plain yogurt)
 - * milk products. Only breast or formula milk should be given as a drink before 12 months
 - * liver and liver products (such as pate)
 - * whole nuts and seeds
 - * soya products (tofu, soya yogurt and so on)
 - * citrus fruits (like oranges or grapefruit) and juices
 - * soft berries (such as raspberries and strawberries)
 - * honey (remember honey should not be given to your baby until they are 12 months old).
- 

If you decide to wean your baby before six months, you will be replacing breast or formula milk, which are very high in nutrients. So it's best not to wean before 6 months, but if you do, give very small quantities. You will need to puree foods to a smooth, thin consistency. Suitable foods are plain baby rice mixed with breast milk or infant formula and served in a bowl (never in a bottle), pureed vegetables such as carrot or parsnip, or pureed fruit such as apple, pear or banana.

All equipment for spoon feeding must be cleaned thoroughly with hot soapy water and dried carefully, or washed in a dishwasher, or can be sterilised, until she is six months old. The amount you give should be guided by your baby's appetite. It is important to move from pureed on to mashed and more lumpy foods from six months as your baby gets used to taking foods from a spoon.

Babies should never be weaned before four months (17 weeks).



Allergies

Babies are more likely to develop allergies if there is a family history of eczema, asthma, hay fever or other allergies. For these families, exclusive breastfeeding is particularly recommended for the first six months. It is a good idea to introduce the foods that are most likely to cause food allergies one at a time, starting with just a small amount, and not before your baby is six months old, so you can spot any reaction. These foods are:

- * celery
- * peanuts
- * nuts
- * seeds
- * eggs
- * soya
- * wheat (and other cereals that contain gluten such as rye, barley and oats)
- * fish and shellfish
- * any milk other than breast milk or infant formula.



More information can be found at the Food Standards Agency (FSA) website – www.food.gov.uk/science/allergy-intolerance

Goat's milk infant formula is now permitted for sale in the UK. However, goat's milk formula is not suitable for babies with a cow's milk protein allergy and should therefore not be given to them, unless directed by a health professional.

If you are introducing nuts, peanuts or seeds from six months, they should be finely chopped to avoid choking. There is further information on preventing choking on the back page.

Peanut allergy

Previous advice for children with a family history of allergy was to avoid peanuts until 3 years of age. This advice has now changed because the latest research has shown that there is no clear evidence to suggest that this will help to reduce the risk of your child developing a peanut allergy.

For children where there is a history of allergy in their immediate family (if the child's parents, brothers or sisters have an allergy such as asthma, eczema, hay fever or other types of allergy), the current advice is that you should speak to your GP or health visitor before introducing peanuts into your baby's diet.

If your child already has a known allergy, such as a diagnosed food allergy or diagnosed eczema, then she has a higher risk of developing a peanut allergy. In this case, you should speak to your GP or health visitor for advice first.

For children with no known allergies, and no family history of allergy in their immediate family, finely chopped peanuts can be introduced as part of a healthy, balanced diet in the same way as other foods which commonly cause allergies (that is, one at a time, checking for any reaction).

Need help? If you think your baby may have reacted to a food, contact your health visitor or GP. Write down what happened and avoid giving that food again unless advised to do so.



Recipes

Remember: Do not add any sugar or salt to your baby's food. If you are not a confident cook ask your health visitor about cooking classes in your area.

All recipes are suitable for freezing unless otherwise stated. Freeze in small tubs as soon as the food has cooled.

Use seasonal fruits and vegetables where possible as they tend to be cheaper and tastier.



Lentil and potato mash (makes 4–5 portions)

50 g (4 dessertspoons) red lentils

1 medium potato, peeled and diced into small pieces

Method:

- Place lentils in a pan. Add 300 mls water and bring to boil. Cover with a lid and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Add potatoes to same pan and cook for a further 15 minutes. Cook until mixture is soft, adding more water if mixture begins to stick to the pan.
- Drain the mix using a sieve but reserve the liquid to add later.
- Mash the mix with a splash of the cooking liquid. Add more liquid if the mixture is too stiff.

Measuring guide for liquids:

- 1 tablespoon is 15 ml
- 1 dessertspoon is 10 ml
- 1 teaspoon is 5 ml



Stewed apple with apricots (makes 2–3 portions)

1 eating apple, peeled and finely chopped
5 canned apricots (natural juice, not syrup),
chopped into pieces
2 tablespoons water

Method:

- Place apple and apricots in a saucepan with the water and gently simmer until the fruit is tender. Add a little more water if necessary during cooking to prevent drying out.
- Mash well.





Simple tomato and vegetable sauce (makes 8 portions of sauce)

Make this simple sauce to accompany pasta.

- 1 dessertspoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped
- ½ a red pepper, washed, deseeded and finely chopped
- ½ a courgette, washed and finely chopped
- 400 g can chopped tomatoes in juice

Method:

- Heat oil and gently soften onion for 5 minutes on low heat, stirring continually.
- Add pepper and courgette and cook on a low heat for a further 5 minutes. Keep stirring.
- Add tomatoes, cover with a lid and cook for 15 minutes or until vegetables are soft, stirring occasionally.

To serve with pasta and cheese:

- 15–20 g (2 dessertspoons) small pasta shapes
- 1 tablespoon grated, pasteurised, full-fat cheddar cheese

Method:

- Cook pasta according to the packet instructions.
- Drain and serve with two dessertspoons of the tomato and vegetable sauce and top with cheese.

Variation: Add 200 g (8 oz) minced beef when you are softening the onion and follow the rest of the recipe to make a bolognese sauce. This will increase the number of portions the recipe makes.



Creamy lentil and vegetable curry (makes 7 portions of curry)

- 1 dessertspoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 small carrot, scrubbed, grated or finely chopped
- 100 g (8 dessertspoons) split red lentils
- ½ teaspoon mild curry powder (not paste)
- 200 mls water
- 1 small carton pasteurised full-fat natural yogurt

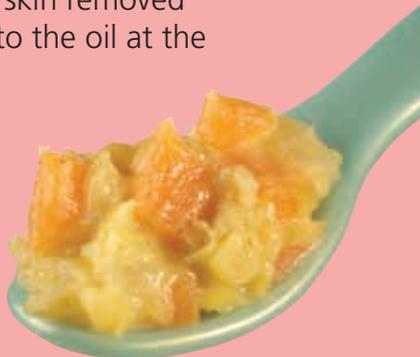
Method:

- Heat oil and gently soften onion for five minutes.
- Stir in carrot, lentils and curry powder.
- Add water, stir and bring to boil. Cover with a pot lid, reduce heat and simmer for 15–20 minutes. Stir continually (as this sticks to the pot very easily) and add a little more water if necessary. The mixture should be quite thick but not dry.
- When the lentils are soft, remove from heat and stir in natural yogurt.
- Mash as required and serve with boiled white rice.

Variation: A small chicken breast with the skin removed or quorn fillet, finely diced, may be added to the oil at the beginning along with the onion.



Creamy lentil and
vegetable curry





Cottage pie with mash (makes 6 portions)

100 g minced beef or minced lamb, chicken,
pork or quorn

½ small onion, finely chopped

1 small carrot, scrubbed and grated

1 tablespoon of frozen peas

4 medium ordinary or sweet potatoes, peeled
and cut into four equal pieces

1–2 tablespoons pasteurised full-fat milk

Method:

- Place mince and chopped onion in a small pan and cook gently until the mince has browned. Add 2–3 tablespoons of water and the grated carrot. Cover and allow to cook gently for 15–20 minutes. Add peas five minutes before the end of cooking time.
- Stir occasionally, adding more water as required.
- Cover potatoes with water in a pan and put a lid on the pan. Cook until soft. Add more water if needed. Then drain and mash together with 1–2 tablespoons of milk.
- When mince is cooked, serve with the mashed potato.





Mashed potato with vegetables (makes 4 portions)

2 medium potatoes or sweet potatoes (or 1 medium potato and 1 medium parsnip), peeled and diced
5 small florets of broccoli, or cauliflower or green beans
1 spring onion, washed and trimmed
Pasteurised full-fat milk to mix (optional)

Method:

- Cook potatoes (and parsnip if used) in a pan of boiling water. Add broccoli to the pan for the last 5 minutes of cooking.
- Drain vegetables and set aside broccoli.
- Mash potato (along with parsnip, if using). Add milk/water to make a smooth mash. Slice spring onion very finely and add to potato.
- Serve with florets of broccoli on the side.



Cottage pie
with mash





Home-made carrot soup (makes 6 portions)

Make this for all the family

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 5 large carrots, scrubbed and chopped or grated
- 500 ml of water
- ½ teaspoon grated nutmeg or grated ginger and coriander
- 1 large potato, peeled and chopped into small pieces
- Approx 150 ml pasteurised full-fat milk

Method:

- Heat oil in a large saucepan and cook the onion for 5 minutes over a low heat.
- Add carrots, stir and cover. Cook gently for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Add water and nutmeg, and bring to the boil. Add the chopped potato. Cover and simmer for 15–20 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.
- Blend. Return to the pan and add enough milk to make a smooth soup. Stir and heat through.
- Serve with pitta slice or toast fingers with butter or margarine.





Salmon and potato pie (makes 3 portions)

100 g skinless salmon fillet

2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced

6 dessertspoons pasteurised full-fat milk – add some pasteurised grated cheese for flavour

Method:

- Place salmon in a pan and cover with milk. Poach by gently simmering until the fish flakes easily with a fork.
- Remove the salmon but reserve the milk to add to the potatoes later.
- Cook potatoes in a pan of boiling water for 10 minutes or until soft. Drain and mash with the milk from the salmon. Add a little more milk if necessary to adjust consistency.
- Flake fish and add to potato – or serve separately.



Fish pancakes (makes 9 small fishcakes)

Salmon and potato pie mixture (ingredients as above)

1 egg, beaten

Method:

- Add the beaten egg to the salmon and potato pie mixture.
- Pre-heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and drop small spoonfuls of the fish mix into the pan.
- When the mixture is set and golden on the underside, turn over to cook on the remaining side. Press gently on the golden upper side with a fish slice/palette knife to flatten each fish cake.
- When both sides are golden, remove from pan to cool.

Serve warm or cold. These make very good finger foods.

How to prevent your baby from choking:

- Always stay with your baby when she is eating.
- Cook hard or stringy vegetables such as green beans and carrots until they are quite soft for use as finger foods, rather than offering them raw.
- Encourage your baby to chew but avoid giving small items. Foods such as whole grapes or whole cherry tomatoes must be cut into four equal pieces.
- Stop your baby from putting too much food in her mouth.
- Make sure her mouth is empty before the next mouthful of food. It is important to go at your baby's pace.
- Let your baby feed herself so she is in control and the food does not go too far back in her mouth.



Ask your health visitor for advice on how to deal with choking. If your child has special needs and you need expert advice, ask to speak to a speech and language therapist.

For more recipe ideas, visit your library for cookery books on weaning.

If you have access to the internet look at some of these websites:
www.readysteadybaby.org.uk/growing-together/looking-after-your-growing-baby/weaning-your-baby/index.aspx

www.healthystart.nhs.uk

For more information on how to look after your baby's teeth:

www.child-smile.org.uk

It is very important to get specialist information if you are intending to bring up your child as a vegetarian so discuss this with your health visitor.

www.readysteadybaby.org.uk