

# baby's first foods



## Parent Information Booklet

...For everything you need to know on  
when and how to introduce solid food to  
your baby 😊

# What is weaning?

Weaning is *'the introduction of solid food alongside your baby's milk'*

## Why start?

- Breast or formula milk provides your baby with all the nutrients they need for the first 6 months
- After 6 months, baby's energy needs increase
- Babies need to replace low iron stores

## Weaning helps to develop:

- Chewing and biting
- Jaw muscles (for speech)
- Grip and co-ordination
- Your baby's acceptance of lots of new and different tastes and textures (eating habits)



**Window of opportunity: 6-12 months**

When is best to start introducing solid foods?

# When is best to start?

## The current recommendations are:

- Aim to feed your baby only breast milk (or infant formula) for the first 6 months of life
- Wait until your baby is around 6 months old before starting to introduce solid food
- From 6 months, your baby needs more energy and nutrients than milk alone can provide, so don't delay introducing solid food later than 6 months
- Continue to offer regular breast milk (or infant formula) feeds to your baby as you start to introduce solid foods



***Remember, there are more benefits for you and your baby if you wait closer to 6 months***

What are the benefits of waiting closer to 6 months?

# Recognising the signs

There are 3 signs which, together, show that your baby may be ready to start solid food alongside their milk

## Can your baby:



Stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady?



Coordinate their eyes, hands and mouth...pick food up and put it in their mouth all by themselves?



Use their tongue to move food from the front of their mouth to the back and swallow properly, rather than push food out of their mouth?

### Are the following suitable signs?

- ✗ Chewing hands and toys
- ✗ Interested in food
- ✗ Appearing hungry after good feeds
- ✗ Waking in the night

# Benefits of waiting until 6 months

- ✓ Your baby will have developed the skills to:



Sit up and control their head



Take soft food from a spoon and use their tongue to move food from the front to the back of the mouth and swallow properly



Pick up food and feed themselves

- ✓ Reduced risk of choking
- ✓ Reduced risk of developing infections
- ✓ Reduced risk of allergies, eczema, asthma
- ✓ Reduced risk of childhood obesity
- ✓ More physically able to manage solid food, so that the weaning process is quicker and easier

*Every baby is different, and may be ready for solids at different times*

What are the signs that your baby may be ready for solids?

# Q. What if my baby starts waking in the night and appearing hungry? Should I start solids?

**A: No, not necessarily:**

- It's **normal** for young babies to appear hungrier or begin waking in the night when they have previously slept through
- This usually indicates **teething** or a **growth spurt** (they need more energy or calories)
- Young babies' stomachs are very small and can hold more milk than food
- Milk also contains more energy and calories than food, so **it's better to offer more milk** at this early stage. Try:
  - ✓ Offering more milk at each bottle feed
  - ✓ Breastfeeding more often

*Sometimes they just need a cuddle!*

# Getting ready



## Useful items:

- Highchair or bumbo seat with tray
- Soft tip spoon, small bowl, small pots with lids, ice-cube tray
- Plastic sheet or mat



## Key steps for the first meal:

- **Choose a time** when you and your baby are calm and relaxed: keep that as your routine
- Make sure your baby is **sitting up straight** (highchair is best) and facing towards you
- Offer food before, during or after milk feed
- Let baby lead the routine: **look for**



- **Go** signs
- **Stop** signs



- Allow your baby to feed themselves 😊

# Recognising your baby's hunger and fullness cues

Your baby will show you signs to indicate whether they are hungry and want feeding or whether they are full and want to stop eating. It's important to respond to these...

Hunger and Fullness Cues						
	0-4 months	4-6 months	6-8 months	8-12 months	12-15 months	15-24 months
<b>Signs of hunger (GO signs)</b>	Crying or fussing. Gazing at carer. Opens mouth when ready to feed.	Crying or fussing. Smiles & gazes at carer during feeding.	Crying or fussing. Opens mouth. Keen. Leans towards food, reaches out to food.	Crying or fussing, Grabs spoon or food, points to food.	Irritable. Asks for food with words, sounds or gestures.	Leads carer to cupboard or fridge to show what they want.
<b>Signs of fullness (STOP signs)</b>	Stops sucking, spits out nipple or bottle. Falls asleep, arches back.	Spits out nipple or bottle. Falls asleep, stops sucking, arches back.	Turns head, pushes food away or arches back from spoon, easily distracted and spits food out.	Eating slows, clenches mouth shut or pushes food away, easily distracted.	Shakes head to say 'no more'. Plays with food instead of eating it.	Says "all done" or "get down". Plays with food or drops it on the floor.



# Create happy mealtimes

It is really important to establish healthy feeding patterns and behaviours from an early age. Creating a positive atmosphere at mealtimes helps to support healthy eating. The following 7 steps will help you to establish a happy healthy mealtime environment for you and your child.

	Aim for/Encourage 😊	Avoid ☹️
<b>Setting</b>	Sitting down together away from distractions (TV, toys). Having a routine of regular mealtimes and snack times	Allowing your child to move around, play or watch TV at mealtimes. Grazing throughout the day. Giving in to tantrums.
<b>Positioning</b>	Sitting face-to-face or at right angles to each other to ensure good eye contact and communication.	Leaving your baby alone to eat, sitting side-by-side, sitting them on your lap or facing away from each other.
<b>Mood and Atmosphere</b>	Friendly. Smiling, laughing. Focusing on the child and enjoying their company.	Tension. Ignoring your child, being impatient, frowning or being upset and aggressive.
<b>Child participation</b>	Allow the child to explore and touch the food and/or spoon and feed themselves when ready.	Holding the food and spoon away from your child, holding their arms down if they try to feed themselves. Worrying about or trying to prevent mess.
<b>Pacing</b>	Offering food at a moderate pace to allow time for chewing and swallowing. Pausing between mouthfuls until your child signals they are ready for more.	Fast-paced feeding without pauses. Continuing to feed when your child has signalled they have had enough.
<b>Encouragement</b>	Offering healthy food choices and acting as a role model by eating them too. Making positive comments about the food.	Pleading, bribing or commanding your child to eat. Offering food when the child is not ready, not hungry or distracted. Making negative remarks about the food you are offering.
<b>Conversation</b>	Cheerful conversations (not always about food). Offering warm comments, questions and praise.	Silence, commands, criticism or ignoring your child's attempts to communicate with you.

# Getting started

*At first, the aim is just to get your baby used to the feel of food in their mouth*

## **FIRST FOODS: Offer 1-2 spoonfuls of:**

- Baby rice or baby porridge
- Mashed cooked vegetables:  
(parsnip, carrot, swede, broccoli)
- Mashed ripe fruit:  
(bananas, cooked apple or pear)



## **NEXT FOODS: From 6 months:**

- Meat, fish, chicken, eggs (well cooked)
- Lentils, beans, pulses
- Bread, rice, cereals, pasta
- Full fat milk products  
(Yoghurts, cheese, custard)



*Move from: smooth, to mashed, to mashed with soft lumps, to bigger lumps then chopped food*

# Introducing foods from 6 months

If introducing solid food at 6 months there is no need to begin on smooth purees. However, some parents may feel more confident trying smooth food for a couple of days before moving on to a more mashed texture.

**Red Pepper**



Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



Smooth



Mashed



Finger food

**Broccoli**

**Egg**



Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



Smooth



Mashed



Finger food

**Salmon**

# Finger foods

*Finger foods are suitable from 6 months and allow your baby to bite and chew even if they don't have teeth*

## FOODS TO OFFER:

- Fingers of toast, bread, pitta bread, chapatti, crumpets
- Slices of soft peeled fruit such as pear, peach, melon, banana
- Soft cooked vegetables such as carrot, broccoli, parsnips
- Soft cooked pasta shapes
- Chunks of cheese or cooked meats



## FOODS TO AVOID:

- ✗ Sweet biscuits and rusks
- ✗ Chocolate
- ✗ Crisps



*Finger foods are for babies to feed themselves*

# Finger foods

**First finger food should be soft but not mushy:**

Banana, avocado, cooked carrot, soft-cooked potato, cooked peppers

**Foods for 7-9 months should still be soft and easy to chew:**

Cooked broccoli, green beans, peas, pasta, potato, egg, cucumber, apricot, grapes (sliced), kiwi, melon, canned peach, bread, butter beans

**Babies from 10 months should be able to manage harder foods and raw foods:**

Celery, tomato, apple slices, orange, cheese, chicken, chickpeas, rice cakes, bread sticks

**Other tips:**

- Cut food into manageable pieces, strips, sticks
- Remove pips, stones, tough skin, stringy bits, bones
- Cut grapes in half
- Ensure all raw food is washed thoroughly first
- Encourage independence in eating





# Gagging and Choking

Gagging is very common when introducing solid food and helps to protect babies from choking

- With practice, baby will learn how to move food around their mouth and avoid their gag reflex
- When baby gags you may notice a few moments of coughing, teary eyes, a red face, and spluttering



## What you need to do:

- Pause and give baby time to ‘recover’
- Continue offering food responsively

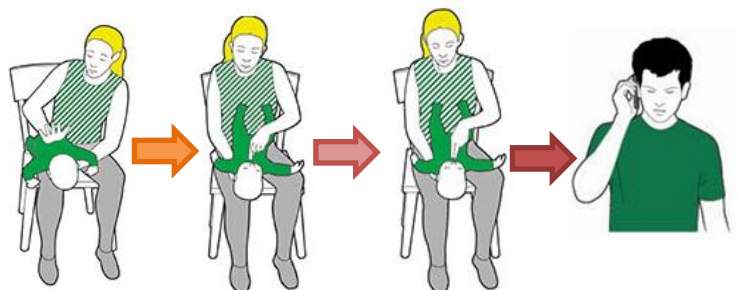
If you are offering foods safely, choking is much less common

- Your baby may be choking if they suddenly become distressed, have noisy breathing, if they are unable to cry or cough. In some cases they may not be able to make any noise or cry

## What you need to do:

St John’s Ambulance recommend:

- Slap it out
- Check their mouth
- Squeeze it out
- Call 999



# Foods to avoid

The following foods should be avoided for all babies:

- **Salt**
- **Sugar**
- Honey
- Chillies
- Whole nuts
- Low fat foods
- High fibre foods (high bran)



**Before 6, months babies have an increased risk of allergies and infections so must also avoid:**

- Gluten (cereals, bread, pasta)
- Cows milk (other than infant formulas)
- Nuts and seeds
- Eggs
- Fish or raw or cooked shellfish
- Liver and liver products
- Soft and unpasteurised cheeses



Reading food labels can help you choose healthy foods for your family

# Reading food labels

## Traffic Light System

	Sugars	Fat	Saturates	Salt
What is <b>HIGH</b> per 100g	Over 22.5g	Over 17.5g	Over 5g	Over 1.5g
What is <b>MEDIUM</b> per 100g	Between 5-22.5g	Between 3-17.5g	Between 1.5 - 5g	Between 0.3-1.5g
What is <b>LOW</b> per 100g	5g Or less	3g Or less	1.5g Or less	0.3g Or less

When reading food labels, go for as many **greens** as possible!

## How healthy are commercial baby foods?

Let's take a look at Heinz Farley's Rusks...

Typical Values	Per 100g	Per biscuit
Energy	411kcal	70kcal
Protein	7.0g	1.2g
Carbohydrate	79.2g	13.5g
Of which sugars	29.0g	4.9g
Fat	7.2g	1.2g
Of which saturates	3.1g	0.5g
Fibre	2.1g	0.4g
Salt	0.03g	Trace



# Progressing through the stages: 7-9 months

**By 7-9 months of age your baby may be:**

- Eating a range of mashed food with soft lumps
- Eating soft finger food
- Having 3 meals a day
- Having 4 milk (breast or formula) feeds a day (600ml/20oz)



At 7-9 months old, a baby might have an eating pattern similar to the one below:

<b>Breakfast</b>	Cereal with milk Fruit finger food Breast feed or infant formula (150ml)
<b>Sleep</b>	
<b>Lunch</b>	Savoury course and savoury finger food Dessert Breast feed or infant formula (150ml)
<b>Sleep</b>	
<b>Tea</b>	Savoury course and savoury finger food Breast feed or infant formula (150ml)
<b>Before bed</b>	Breast feed or infant formula (150ml)

# Progressing through the stages: 10-12 months

By 10-12 months of age, your baby may be:

- Eating a range of minced or chopped family foods
- Eating soft and hard finger foods
- Having 3 meals a day
- Having 3 (breast/formula) feeds a day (400ml/14oz)



At 10-12 months old, a baby might have an eating pattern similar to the one below:

<b>Breakfast</b>	Cereal with milk Fruit as finger food Breast feed or infant formula in a cup (100ml)
<b>Sleep</b>	
<b>Lunch</b>	Savoury course and savoury finger food Dessert Water in a cup to drink
<b>Sleep</b>	
<b>Tea</b>	Savoury course and savoury finger food Dessert and fruit finger food Breast feed or infant formula (100ml)
<b>Before bed</b>	Breast feed or infant formula (200ml)

# Progressing through the stages: skills and textures

## 6 months

- Taking food from a spoon
- Moving food to the back of the mouth for swallowing
- Smooth purees
- Mashed foods
- Soft finger foods

## 7-9 months

- Moving lumps around mouth
- Chewing lumps of food
- Using fingers to feed themselves
- Sipping from a cup
- Mashed foods, soft lumps
- Soft finger foods
- 3 meals a day
- 4 milk feeds (600ml)

## 10-12 months

- Chewing chopped family food
- Using a spoon to feed themselves
- Soft and hard finger foods
- Chopped family foods
- 3 meals a day
- 3 milk feeds (400ml)

# Cups and Drinks

*The aim is to have all babies off their bottle by the age of 12 months*

## Current recommendations:

- Offer any additional drinks in a free-flow feeder cup from 6 months
- Stop the bottle by baby's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday



## Suitable drinks:

- ✓ Water (boiled and cooled when under 6 months)
- ✓ 100% fruit juice (1 part to 10 parts water; main meals only)

## Drinks to avoid:

- ✗ Squashes, cordials, flavoured milk, fizzy drinks, diet drinks
- ✗ Tea, coffee
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Cow or goat or sheep milk (until 12 months)
- ✗ Non-dairy alternatives, eg, soya, oat or almond milks (until 12 months)
- ✗ Rice milks (until 5 years)



# Allergy advice

- More likely if there's a family history of asthma, eczema, hay fever or food allergies
- Breast-feed exclusively for first 6 months
- Establish weaning with low allergenic foods first (rice, potatoes, fruits and vegetables)
- Then introduce main allergy-causing foods in small amounts and one at a time:
  - Cow's milk and dairy products
  - Eggs
  - Wheat and gluten
  - Citrus fruits and celery
  - Fish and shellfish
  - Sesame and mustard seeds, soy products
  - Nuts: almonds, peanuts, peanut butter \*

**Note\*** families should consult their health visitor, GP or dietitian before offering peanuts if there's a history of food allergies or other allergies



# Vitamin supplements

**A daily dose of vitamin D is recommended for:**

- All breastfed babies from birth

**A daily dose of vitamins A, C and D are recommended for:**

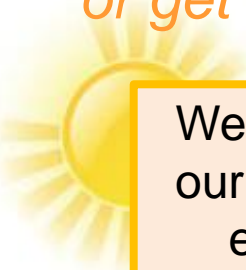
- All children under 5 years old\*
- Breastfed babies from 6 months\*
- Formula-fed babies on less than 500ml\*

\*ask your health visitor about when to start giving your baby vitamins and whether you qualify for Healthy Start

**A daily dose of vitamins C, D and folic acid is recommended for:**

- Pregnant or breastfeeding women

*You can either buy them from your local pharmacy or get them free if you qualify for Healthy Start*



We get most of our vitamin D from the sunlight on our skin, but some groups are at risk of not getting enough, especially pregnant or breastfeeding women, babies and children under 5 years and those with darker skin, which is why a vitamin supplement is recommended 😊

# Summary

**Hopefully, you now feel more confident about introducing solid food to your baby...**

- Start solids around 6 months when recognising the 3 developmental signs
- Offer 1-2 teaspoons at a suitable milk feed time
- Be responsive: look for and respond to stop and go signs from your baby
- Move from mashed foods, to mashed with soft lumps, then chopped foods
- Gradually build up from offering food once a day to twice and then three times a day by 7 months
- Offer a range of different tastes, textures & colours (window of opportunity 6-12months)
- Avoid foods and drinks high in sugar and salt
- Offer additional drinks in a free-flow feeder cup from 6 months (off the bottle by 12 months)
- Offer daily vitamins A, C and D
- Eat together as a family as often as possible
- Keep active: you and your baby 😊



# Useful information

## For more information on feeding your baby:

- Talk to your midwife, health visitor or nursery nurse

## Useful Websites:

- First Steps Nutrition [www.firststepsnutrition.org](http://www.firststepsnutrition.org)
- Start4life [www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)
- NHS Healthy Eating [www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating)
- Healthy Start [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)



Feeding your baby around Bolton



Feeding your baby around Bolton – bottle feeding



Feeding your baby around Bolton – solid food