

**Better  
Health**

**Start  
for Life**

**NHS**

# **Time to start solid foods**

**Better Health - Start for Life**



**easy  
read**



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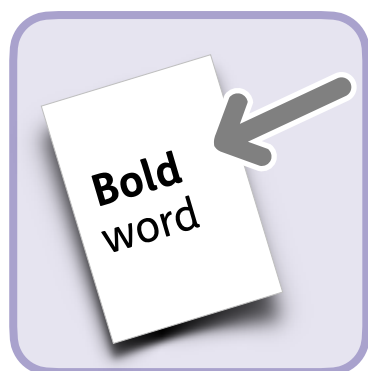
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In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.

# When should my baby start solid foods?



It's best to wait until your baby is about 6 months old before you give them solid foods, alongside breast milk or **infant formula**.



**Infant formula** is also called baby milk. It is a powder that you make into a milky drink for your baby.



Waiting until your baby is about 6 months old gives them time to grow properly so they can cope with solid foods.

# How do I know when it's time to start weaning?



**Weaning** is when you start to give your baby solid foods.



When your baby is about 6 months old, you will know that they are ready for solid food when they:

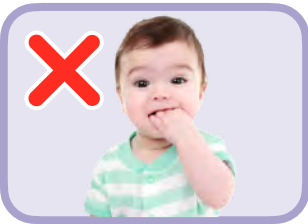
- Sit up and hold their head steady in a high chair.



- Use their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at food, pick it up and put it in their mouth.



- Swallow food rather than push it back out.



Your baby may not be ready for solid food if they are just:

- Chewing their fists.



- Waking in the night more than usual.

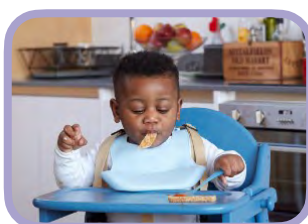


- Wanting extra milk feeds.

## How much food does my baby need?



To start with, your baby will only need a small amount of food each day – so don't worry about how much they eat.



The most important thing is trying new foods and flavours and learning to swallow solid foods.

## Does my baby still need milk?



As time goes on and your baby eats more solid foods, they may want less breast milk or infant formula.



Remember your baby's tummy is tiny and fills up quickly – so offer milk after solid foods.



### Follow-on formula

You shouldn't give follow-on formula to babies under 6 months.



But even after 6 months, babies don't need to have follow-on formula. They can stick with their first infant formula.

## What if my baby doesn't want to eat?



It may take a while for your baby to get used to new solid foods.



There will be days when they eat lots and some when they eat less.

There will be days when they don't want to eat any of it.

Don't worry – it's normal.



## Pulling a face

They might make funny faces, but that doesn't mean they don't like it.

They're just getting used to new tastes and types of food.

## How much sugar should my baby eat?



Babies don't need sweet or salty snacks or treats.

Many snacks you buy in shops have a lot of sugar and salt.



Avoid things like biscuits, chocolate, sweets and pastries.



Sweet drinks like squash, fizzy drinks, milkshakes and fruit juice can have lots of sugar too. Even baby and toddler drinks can be sugary.



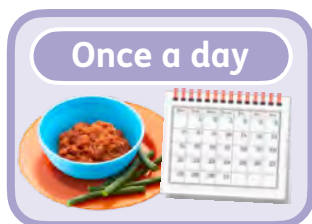
Do not give these to your baby as they may damage their teeth.



Give them sips of water from a cup with meals.



# A guide to weaning



## What you need

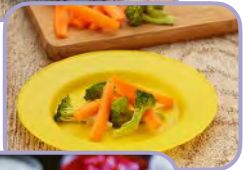
- A high chair - your baby needs to be sitting up safely, and strapped into the chair at all times. Never leave them alone somewhere they could fall.
- A first cup - try to get your baby to sip water from a cup with their meals. This helps them learn to sip and is better for their teeth.
- Soft weaning spoons.

## From about 6 months old

- Start with small portions.
- Solid food just once a day is enough to start with.
- You can try mashed, **pureed** or soft cooked sticks (finger foods) of parsnip, potato, yam, sweet potato, carrot, apple or pear.  
**Pureed** is when you whizz the food into mush - maybe in a liquidiser.



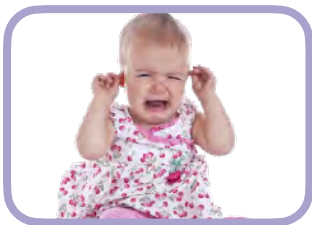
- Try one type of fruit or veg at a time at first.



- It's best to give your baby lots of different types of food:
  - Protein - like meat, fish, eggs, beans or lentils.
  - Veg - like broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, and carrot.
  - Dairy - like yoghurt and cheese.
  - Fruit - like bananas, oranges, melon, peaches and plums.
  - Starchy foods - like rice, pasta, noodles, bread, potato.



- Food that is most likely to cause **allergies**, like peanuts, eggs, or fish, can be given one at a time from around 6 months.



**Allergies** are when your body can't deal with something - it might make you ill. Different people can be allergic to different things.



- Remember, peanuts should be crushed or ground so baby doesn't choke.





## From about 7 to 9 months

- Your baby will slowly move towards 3 meals a day.
- Stay with your baby so you can be sure they are swallowing their food safely.



- Babies under 12 months don't need snacks. If they are hungry between meals - offer them extra milk.



## From about 10 to 12 months

- Your baby needs 3 meals a day plus milk feeds.



- Meals can be a main course and a pudding - like fruit or yoghurt.



- Keep trying different sorts of food. You can try bigger chunks of food that they can pick up for themselves.



- Include vegetables that aren't so sweet, like broccoli, cauliflower and spinach. This can help them not to be so fussy.



## From about 12 months

- Your baby may need 2 healthy snacks between meals - like fruit or vegetable sticks, toast, bread or yoghurt.



- Cut food into sticks, not round shapes.



- Your baby can now drink cows' milk. Choose full fat milk for children under 2 as they need the extra energy.



- If you are breastfeeding, carry on for as long as you both want.



- Plain water is the best drink to have with meals. Avoid sugary drinks as these are bad for your child's teeth.

## For more information



You can get simple and healthy recipes and advice on the Better Health website: [www.nhs.uk/better-health/start-for-life](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/start-for-life)



Or email:  
[betterhealth-startforlife@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:betterhealth-startforlife@dhsc.gov.uk)