

Tasty Beginnings:

A Guide to Starting Solid Foods



Parent Information

Tips for introducing solid foods to
your baby

Introducing solid food

Introducing solid food is an important milestone, as it helps your baby learn about tastes, textures and eating together.

Eating as a family with your baby, can make them feel more included and can help them develop their social skills. A baby loves to copy, therefore it's important you are a good role model. By making healthier food choices and establishing a healthy eating pattern, this gives your baby the best start, which will last them a life time.

You can save time and money, by preparing and adapting family meals to make them suitable for your baby. Offer a variety of foods to ensure a balanced diet and avoid foods with added sugar, salt or highly processed foods for example sausages, chicken nuggets, instant noodles or ready-meals such as cottage pie or lasagne.

Your baby's appetite and the amount they eat can vary from day to day - so try not to worry and let them decide how much they want to eat.

To make mealtimes a positive, stress-free experience - look out for signs that your baby has had enough to eat for example they may turn their head away, close their mouth or push food away.

Your baby may refuse to try new foods, because it's a new taste or texture. It's important to keep trying, it can take more than 10 attempts for your baby to accept something new.

Under the age of 1 year, your baby does not need snacks, if they appear hungry between meals offer them their usual milk instead.



Self-feeding and keeping safe

Encouraging your baby to self-feed or feed themselves has many benefits including:

- your baby has more control, as they can eat at their own pace and finish eating when they want to.
- using fingers to pick up foods helps with the development of fine motor skills and hand-to-eye co-ordination.
- exposing your baby to different shapes and textures which helps with the development of chewing skills.
- your baby can choose what they want to eat, as well as, decide how hungry they are. This helps to prevent your baby from eating too much which can increase the chance of them becoming overweight.

Palmer grasp is where the fingers curl around an object towards the palm of the hand. Your baby will develop this at around 6 months old, allowing them to pick up larger pieces of food.



Pincer grasp is where the index finger and thumb are used to pick up an object. Your baby will develop this at around 9 months old allowing them to pick up smaller finger foods.



- Gagging is something babies do naturally, try not to panic as your baby should be able to cough, cry and breathe.
- Choking is different to gagging. Choking is when food becomes lodged in your babies windpipe, making it difficult for them to breathe, they will not be making a noise.

Babies and young children should always be closely supervised and never left alone when eating and drinking.

Fruit and vegetables



- All types of vegetables in particular green ones and most types of fruit make ideal first foods.
- Make sure you wash and remove any inedible or thick skin from fruits or vegetables before offering to your baby.
- Offer a variety of fruit and vegetables that are in season, they're often fresher, tastier and cheaper to buy.
- Soft fruits and steamed vegetables make ideal first foods.
- First vegetables and fruits should be offered as chunkier slices, so they can be easily picked up. Also they should be soft enough so that they can be squashed in your baby's hand or between their fingers.
- As your baby progresses, vegetables and fruit should be cut into smaller pieces eg adult pinkie-sized slices or lengthways into slices or quarters.
- You can also use tinned fruit or vegetables, make sure it's tinned in water or natural juice.
- Frozen fruit and vegetables must be fully defrosted and washed and/or cooked before serving.

Starchy foods



- Starchy food should be a major part of your baby's diet as they are a good source of energy, vitamins and minerals.
- Potatoes including sweet potatoes and yams are the starchy part of a meal, they do not count towards one of the five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Offer cooked potatoes either mashed or cut into wedges.
- Overcooked rice is slightly sticky which can make it easier for your baby to pick up.
- Pasta can be offered on its own or with a sauce.
- Soften low-sugar, wholegrain cereals with full-fat milk e.g. wheat or oat type biscuit cereal.
- To keep bread or toast moist, spread with full fat spread, smooth peanut butter or mashed avocado or banana. Then cut into fingers or quarter triangle shapes.

Milk and dairy foods



- Milk and dairy foods contain protein and calcium which are needed for growth and bones and teeth development.
- Suitable milks for babies under 1 year old include breast milk or infant formula that's labelled suitable from birth.
- All dairy and non-dairy plant based products such as cheese and yoghurts should be full-fat and pasteurised.
- Soya based infant formula should only be used under medical supervision.
- Other types of milk including cow's, goat's and sheep's milk should not be given as a drink but can be used in cooking, as long as they are pasteurised and full fat.
- Unsweetened, calcium fortified, plant based alternatives eg. soya, nut, oat, coconut should not be given as a drink but can be used in cooking.
- Rice drinks should not be given to children under 5 years old because they contain arsenic.
- From 6 months old, babies can be offered plain tap water in a cup at meal times.

Protein



- Protein is essential for muscle growth and strength and is a good source of iron.
- Protein foods can be from animal or plant based sources including meat, fish, eggs, tofu, beans, nut butters and pulses such as green or red lentils.
- Protein foods should be cooked thoroughly, although eggs stamped with the British Lion Mark, can be eaten runny.
- Oily fish for example salmon or mackerel are good for heart health and brain development. Aim to include oily fish in your baby's diet once a week. Using tinned or frozen fish will keep the cost down. Make sure any bones are removed.
- It is important to prepare your protein foods so that they are an appropriate size and texture. Try flaking or shredding meat, chicken, fish or tofu. Smooth nut butters and houmous are softer in texture.
- If you have any worries about food allergies, speak to your Health Visitor.

Further Information



Family friendly recipes and early years nutrition information.



Tips and information for introducing solid food.



Choking advice video: how to save a choking baby.



Fun First Foods - An easy guide to introducing solid foods.



Supports eating well from pre-conception to five years.



Vitamin D information from Public Health Scotland.



Vitamin D

- Vitamin D is important for bone and muscle health.
- Although vitamin D is found in some foods, it is difficult to get enough from food alone.
- It is recommended that all pregnant and breastfeeding women, breastfed babies and children under 5 years old take a 10 microgram (µg) vitamin D supplement daily.
- If your baby is breastfed, it is recommended that they are given a daily supplement of vitamin D, from birth. Breastfed babies are entitled to free vitamin D supplements.
- If your baby is fed mainly infant formula (more than 500mls per day) they will not need to take a vitamin D supplement because vitamin D is already added to the infant formula.

Ask your health visitor for advice or where to get free vitamin D supplements.