

How to start weaning

Baby weaning is an exciting time. Here are our top tips on how to start weaning from our resident dietitian.

- ✧ Wait until around 6 months as your baby will need good eye, hand and mouth co-ordination to be able to stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady.
- ✧ Whether you decide to start on pureed food, finger foods (also known as baby-led weaning) or a combination of both - variety is key so baby gets the nutrients they need.
- ✧ Feed your baby on solid food only once a day initially, gradually increasing the amount and variety of food, being responsive to baby's cues.
- ✧ A rough guideline is to start with about 5-10 teaspoons of food (about 30g) at one meal. You can then increase it to two meals a day, and then up to three meals per day.
- ✧ For the first feed make sure baby isn't tired - it may take a while for them to get used to food from a spoon, so patience is key.
- ✧ Your baby is hungrier and more alert first thing, so it's a good time for new foods.
- ✧ Sit baby upright in a high chair with no distractions, like TV, mobiles or tablets.
- ✧ Give them a little of their usual milk first to relax them and take the edge off their hunger
- ✧ For the first feed, try vegetables. There is recent evidence that weaning with veggies helps set up healthy food preferences later on.
- ✧ Try to introduce a new single bitter vegetable every day for one week e.g. broccoli, parsnip, beetroot or courgettes. Keep a camera ready - you may get some funny faces.



- ✧ Repeat this process for the second week to get baby used to bitter vegetables.
- ✧ Remember it can take ten tries or more for your baby to accept a new flavour so don't give up!
- ✧ Keep a feeding schedule stuck on the fridge to track what your baby has tried, and how often.
- ✧ Only try one new food at a time, combining flavours after a couple of weeks.
- ✧ Praise baby when they try something new.
- ✧ Baby's weaning diet should include the essential food groups – fruits and vegetables, bread and starchy foods, dairy, meat and proteins, and fats.
- ✧ Variety is key to ensure baby is getting the right nutrients for growth and development such as iron, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin D and omega 3 fatty acids.
- ✧ Vegetarian or vegan? That's fine just include a variety of foods such as eggs, ground nuts or seeds, soy products (tofu), cereal foods, pulses such as beans, peas and lentils to ensure they get all the nutrients they need.
- ✧ If giving baby a vegetarian or vegan diet they may need additional supplements so speak to your healthcare professional for advice.
- ✧ Babies can eat nuts from about 6 months as long as they are crushed, finely ground or in smooth peanut butter. Whole nuts and peanuts should not be given before the age of 5 years. If your baby has eczema or you have a history of allergies in your family speak to your GP first.
- ✧ Foods to avoid? Whole nuts and grapes are a choking hazard; ensure they are chopped up. Pâté, raw shellfish and mould-ripened or unpasteurised cheeses carry a small risk of food poisoning so are not suitable under the age of two.
- ✧ Shark, swordfish and marlin contain high levels of mercury and honey may contain bacteria that can lead to infant botulism so should be avoided.
- ✧ Remember to give your baby lots of encouragement. Babies are curious so if you're enjoying food on your plate they are likely to be more eager to have some.