

Fun First Foods

An easy guide to introducing solid foods



Further information and resources

More information on weaning and first foods can be found at:
www.parentclub.scot/topics/food-eating/weaning-first-foods

Parent Club

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

For information on Best Start Foods, which provides support to eligible families to buy healthy foods:

www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods

For more information on how to look after your baby's teeth:
www.childsmile.nhs.scot

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.

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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 their 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 into your baby's diet alongside breast milk or infant formula until they are 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 milk feeds will reduce as your baby takes more food. They are likely to let you know when they are ready to stop breastfeeding. If you are giving infant formula, you should switch to pasteurised whole or semi-skimmed cow's, goat's or sheep's milk in an open or free-flow cup after their first birthday. The amount of milk they need will also decrease with time.

When is the best time to introduce solid foods?

Introducing solid foods is an important step in your baby's development. It helps them learn about new tastes and textures and take part in family meals.

Health experts recommend starting solid foods at around 6 months of age, when your baby is ready. Until this point, breast milk or infant formula provides all the nutrition your baby needs. From around 6 months, babies need additional nutrients, including iron, alongside their milk feeds.

As your baby grows:

- gradually increase the variety and amount of foods
- continue to offer breast milk or infant formula alongside solids

By around 12 months, solid foods should be the main part of your baby's diet. This supports healthy growth and development.

Why is weaning at around 6 months (and not before 4 months) the best time?

Your baby's immune system, digestive system and kidneys are still developing during the early months. So waiting until they are around 6 months old to start weaning (and not before 4 months) gives their body time to mature and be ready to safely manage solid foods.

It's equally important not to wait beyond around 6 months to start solids, as at this age, your baby will be developing important feeding skills and will need extra nutrients from then on to support growth and development.

What about bigger babies – will they need solid food earlier?

It does not really matter what weight your baby was at birth – the digestive system, immune system and kidneys 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 their age. If your baby seems particularly hungry at any time, they may be having a growth spurt and extra breastfeeding or infant formula will be enough to meet their needs. Even if your baby is not sleeping through the night when they 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 or family nurse.

Do I have to wait until my baby is around 6 months old – can I start earlier?

Babies should start solid foods at around 6 months of age. This guidance is based on recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition and the Scottish Government.

If you have been given medical advice to introduce solids earlier, you will need to avoid certain foods. Please see page 34 for more information.

Premature babies

When a baby is premature, it means they were born before the pregnancy reached 37 weeks. Ask your local neonatal team or health visitor for advice on what's best for your baby.

Further information is available from BLISS at:
www.bliss.org.uk/parents/about-your-baby/feeding/weaning-your-premature-baby

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

Every baby develops at their own pace but there are some signs that show when they are ready for solid foods. As your baby approaches 6 months (and not before 4 months), it's important to look for the developmental signs to help you decide when they are ready. These are:

- Your baby can stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady.
- They can reach out and grab things accurately, for example, they may look at food, pick it up and bring it to their mouth by themselves.
- Their tongue reflex has developed to enable them to move food around their mouth with their tongue instead of pushing food out. 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 your baby shows signs of swallowing.

If your baby is looked after by someone else during the day, this should not affect how you wean your baby. They need to know if your baby is eating finger foods, how to prepare foods safely and how to ensure your baby has the right support in a high chair. It's also very important that you ensure that any family member, friend, nursery staff or childminder caring for your child knows to supervise meals at all times and check that all food has been swallowed before leaving them.

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.

Getting started

How to start

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 6 months old).

When eating, your baby should be sitting upright, preferably in a high chair with a securely fitted harness and a foot rest to stop them slipping down. This will help them to swallow properly and will also help if your baby prefers to pick up finger foods themselves. Stop them from putting too much food in their mouth in one go.



What to expect

Babies usually learn to enjoy weaning onto solids. Try not to worry about mess. Your baby may spit food out the first couple of times – this is normal, just wait and try another day. Some babies take to it quickly, some take longer. Encourage your baby to chew by offering different textures.

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 them take it at their 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 salt, sugar or sweeteners.
- Mashed cooked vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrot, parsnip or turnip.
- Mashed fruit such as banana, stewed apple or pear.



Mashed banana

- Soft fruit or cooked vegetables, such as melon or carrot, cut into slices rather than chunks or round shapes.
- Strips of toast, bread, pitta bread or chapatti.
- Pasteurised cheese, scrambled or hard-boiled eggs or chunks of cooked fish which your baby can pick up (be careful to remove all bones from cooked fish).
- Plain baby rice or other cereal mixed with their usual feed (expressed breast milk or formula) – always in a bowl, not in their bottle. If your baby is 6 months or over, pasteurised whole cow's milk can be used to mix with cereal, but not to drink before 12 months of age. There is further information on drinks on page 27.

Babies should start solid foods at around 6 months of age. If you have been advised by a health professional to introduce solids earlier, see page 34 for more information and guidance on foods to avoid.

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 them when they are hungry and stopping when they are full, for example, when they close their mouth or turn their head away.
- Gradually increase the amount of food.
- Be guided by your baby's appetite – for example, they may want a few teaspoons of well-mashed food or a few pieces of finger food.
- Encourage your baby to feed themselves using their fingers as soon as they show interest, so they have more control over what goes into their mouth.
- Offer your baby a range of foods and textures, particularly vegetables and fruit.

- Do not force them to take the food – if they do not seem to want it, try again later.
- Give your baby time to swallow each mouthful. Make sure their mouth is empty before taking the next mouthful of food. It's important to go at your baby's pace.
- Never add sugar, honey 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. If your baby is sharing family foods, the whole family will benefit from eating less salt and sugar. Page 23 has more about family meals. Do not put any foods in your baby's bottle as they will feel full, take less feed and may not receive all the nourishment they need.

Never leave your baby alone while eating in case they choke, and supervise them closely.



Tip

- Cook hard or stringy fruits and vegetables until they are quite soft for use as finger foods, rather than offering them raw.
- Remove any stones, pips or tough skin from fruit and vegetables.
- Cut fruit and vegetables into slices rather than chunks or round shapes.
- Remove bones, skin or stringy bits from cooked meat and fish.
- Introduce nuts, seeds and peanuts in ground form or butter or paste. Whole nuts, seeds and peanuts should not be given to babies as they can be a choking risk.
- Add a little water to smooth nut butters to thin the texture.
- Encourage your baby to chew by offering different textures.
- Stop your baby from putting too much food in their mouth all at once.

To see a video and advice on how to cope with a choking baby, go to **www.nhs.uk/choking-baby** and/or **www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid/learn-first-aid-for-babies-and-children/choking-baby**

Food safety

- Wash your hands before preparing food and wash your baby's hands before they eat.
- 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.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly before use. This includes pre-packed items.

- Cook all meat properly, especially chicken and mince. Ensure there's no pink meat, the juices run clear and it's steaming hot in the middle.
- Make sure you stir and test any heated food before giving it to your baby.
- Make sure you do not use food past its use-by date. Follow the instructions on the food labels.
- Keep food that you have prepared chilled in a fridge (below 5°C) and eat it within two days.
- Defrost frozen food thoroughly before reheating and do not refreeze any leftover food.
- When reheating food, heat it until it is steaming hot all the way through and cool it before offering to your baby. Heat only the amount of food you need. Throw away any uneaten heated food.
- Eggs should have a British Lion stamp or be from the Laid in Britain assurance scheme.

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 their 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 they are relaxed and happy. At first, this might be after their usual feeds.

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

Potatoes or pasta, rice, bread 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 (for example, wholegrain wheat cereal), potatoes, 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 do not have any added salt. Give dried fruit at mealtimes rather than as a snack, as it can also be bad for your baby's teeth.

Soft fruits and cooked 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, pips or tough skin before serving
- chop small fruits and vegetables, like cherry tomatoes and grapes, into four equal pieces
- cut large fruits into slices rather than chunks
- cook hard or stringy fruits and vegetables until they are quite soft for use as finger foods, rather than offering them raw



Tip

To encourage your baby to eat fruits and vegetables, eat them yourself. A baby loves to copy their 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, peanuts, tree nuts (almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, Brazils) 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. Remove bones, skin or stringy bits from cooked meat and fish. Whole nuts, seeds and peanuts should be ground or in a smooth, low-salt butter.



Pasteurised full-fat milk and other dairy foods

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, for example, cheese and yoghurt. Make sure you use pasteurised full-fat or whole dairy products such as full-fat, plain, unsweetened yoghurt or fromage frais, and pasteurised whole cow's milk when cooking, for example, cheese sauce, custard, rice pudding and semolina.



Fats

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 full fats in their diets. After age 2 they can gradually move to a lower-fat diet, the same as the rest of the family. Use vegetable oils like olive or sunflower oil for cooking, and vegetable margarine (such as sunflower) on bread or toast fingers.

Moving on

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

- More meals – moving from food at one meal each day to food at two and three meals each day. By 12 months your baby will probably have three meals and two snacks in between.
- More foods – giving your baby food from each of the food groups (see pages 12 to 17).
- More texture – from mashed to 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 20.
- More food experiences – drinking from a cup and feeding themselves with a wider range of finger foods.

This process should be carried out 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 they want to eat from what you offer but do not spend longer than 20 minutes feeding in a high chair.

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 their usual feed. You may wish to offer them tap water in a cup with meals.

Remember all babies are different. Your baby will let you know how much they want to eat and this may vary from day to day. All food should be prepared as appropriate for the age and stage of your child – for example, pureed, mashed, chopped, quartered and so on – to avoid the risk of choking. 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 (for example, wheat biscuits or plain, cooled, hot oat cereal) with smooth low-salt peanut butter, breast milk, infant formula or pasteurised whole cow's milk (if your baby is 6 months and over)

Fruit – soft fruit pieces

Lunch

Minced or mashed food and finger foods, like:

- scrambled eggs or baked beans with toast slices
- **or** homemade lentil and vegetable soup with bread fingers
- **or** pasta with tomato and vegetable sauce or rice with mild chicken curry and vegetables
- **and/or** chopped/mashed banana and full-fat plain yoghurt

Dinner

Minced or mashed food and finger foods, like:

- tuna (in oil or water) and pasta with sweetcorn
- **or** minced meat, or lentils, with mashed potatoes and carrots or broccoli
- **and/or** some tangerine segments, tinned in juice or fresh, with custard

Breast or infant formula milk is still the main source of nutrients in the first nine months, and after that your baby will gradually start to enjoy other nutritious solid foods. If you prefer your child to follow a plant-based or vegan diet, advice on weaning can be found at: **www.firststepsnutrition.org/vegan-infants**

Tip

As the amount of food your baby eats increases, they will need less of their usual milk. However, you should continue to breastfeed for as long as you wish or your baby should drink about 500–600 ml of infant formula a day until they are 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 them to chew. Try finger foods such as cooked carrot sticks, or small pieces of crust or toast.

Vitamins

- Everyone aged 5 years and over should consider taking a daily supplement of vitamin D, particularly in winter.
- Babies under 12 months old should be given a daily supplement of 8.5 to 10 micrograms (ug) of vitamin D all year round, unless they're having at least 500 ml of infant formula a day, as this already contains vitamin D. Children aged 1 to 4 years should be given a daily supplement of 10 ug of vitamin D. You can find out more about why vitamin D is important and how you may be able to get free vitamin D supplements on the Parent Club page at:
www.parentclub.scot/articles/eating-well-at-home
- In Scotland, Healthy Start vitamins containing vitamin D are free for all pregnant women. Vitamin D supplements are now available free of charge for breastfeeding women and babies up to 1 year old.

You can get more information from your health visitor.

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 should not 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, pasta, rice and cereal you offer your baby and do not give them too much of wholemeal or wholegrain varieties.

Follow-on formulas are marketed as a good source of iron but experts agree that they provide no benefit and are not necessary.

Tip

Avoid giving your baby fruit squashes or 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 their first birthday you can expect them to be eating a wide range of different foods from all the food groups each day, such as:

- 3–4 servings of a wide range of fruit and vegetables every day
- 3–4 servings of starchy food each day, like potatoes, bread and rice
- 2 servings of protein, like meat, fish, eggs and pulses
- 2–3 servings of pasteurised dairy products, like milky pudding, yoghurt and cheese

You can find information about potential allergens on page 35.



Simple tomato and vegetable sauce

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

- small smooth peanut butter sandwich
- cucumber sticks or fruit slices
- bread with pasteurised cheese or houmous



Remember to let your baby choose how much and what they want to eat from what you offer.

Joining in with the family

Eating with your baby makes them feel more included, helps them develop social skills and encourages them to get into good habits from a young age. They 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 – your baby will then know what to expect and is more likely to eat happily.
- Cook something all the family can eat.
- Do not add any salt or sugar while cooking (including things like gravy and stock cubes). Babies should not eat salty foods as it is not good for their kidneys and sugar can cause tooth decay.
- Avoid using ready-made meals and food products which have high salt and sugar content.
- Encourage your baby to feed themselves.
- Smile and talk to your baby.
- Babies copy their parents' eating habits so remember to set a good example.
- Children should always sit down when they're eating.
Children are more likely to choke if they eat while lying down, running around or playing.

Tip

Keep foods high in sugar to a minimum and offer them rarely and never 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 but do not let them replace homemade foods. Homemade foods can offer your baby more variety in texture and will encourage them to accept lumps.

Things to remember 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 or 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 have not passed 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 does not 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.
- Shop-bought snacks aimed at babies and toddlers are not necessary – they can be expensive and high in sugar.

Are there any foods I should not give?

- Honey, salt and sugar should not be given to babies before 12 months of age.
- Whole nuts, including peanuts, should be avoided until 5 years of age as there is a risk of choking. However, smooth nut butter is okay to give to your baby.
- Shark, marlin and swordfish should be avoided. This is because the levels of mercury in these fish can have a damaging effect on a baby's or child's developing nervous system. Other fish and shellfish are suitable from around 6 months of age, but raw shellfish should not be given to babies because it increases their risk of getting food poisoning.
- Babies need foods that are high in calories and nutrients because they eat small amounts. Foods labelled low-fat or low-calorie foods are not suitable at this stage.
- Babies and children should not have raw, unpasteurised milk and dairy products, such as cheese made from unpasteurised milk, because of the increased risk of food poisoning.

Tip

How can you get your 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 them, the more likely they are to eat them.

How to prevent your baby from choking

- Always stay with your baby and supervise them closely when they're eating.
- Cook hard or stringy fruits and vegetables until they are quite soft for use as finger foods, rather than offering them raw.
- Remove stones, pips or tough skin from fruit and vegetables.
- Cut fruit and vegetables into slices rather than chunks or round shapes.
- Remove bones, skin or stringy bits from cooked meat and fish.
- Introduce nuts, seeds or peanuts in ground form, or butter or paste form. Whole nuts, including peanuts, should be avoided until 5 years of age as there is a risk of choking. Ground whole nuts and peanuts should be introduced as soon as possible.
- Encourage your baby to chew by offering different textures.
- When eating, your baby should be sitting up, preferably in a high chair with a securely fitted harness and a foot rest to stop them slipping down.
- Stop your baby from putting too much food in their mouth all at once.
- Give your baby time to swallow each mouthful and make sure their mouth is empty before giving them more. Go at your baby's pace.
- Let your baby feed themselves so they have more control over what goes into their mouth.
- Watch out for small round food items as they can get stuck in the throat. Cut food into slices or grate cheese rather than chunks.
- Avoid giving popcorn to under-5s as it's a choking risk.

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

What can your baby drink?

Solid foods and milk for your baby

You should continue to breastfeed or give your baby first infant formula until they're at least 1 year old. Breastfeeding will continue to benefit you and your baby for as long as you carry on.

As your baby eats more solid foods, the amount of milk they want will decrease. Once your baby is eating plenty of solids several times a day, they may even drop a milk feed altogether.

Beakers and cups for babies

Introduce your baby to drinking from a cup or beaker from around 6 months old and offer sips of water with meals. Using an open cup or a free-flow cup without a valve will help your baby learn to sip and is better for your baby's teeth.

Once your baby is 1 year old, feeding from a bottle should be discouraged. When using a bottle or trainer cup, do not put anything in it other than breast milk, formula milk or water, and do not add anything else (including sugar, cereals, baby rice or chocolate powder) to the feed.

Comfort sucking from a bottle on sweetened drinks causes tooth decay in young children. Drinks flow very slowly through a teat, which means the sugary substance will be in contact with their teeth for longer.

For more information on looking after your baby's teeth, see:
www.childsmile.nhs.scot/parents-carers/oral-health-for-babies-birth-to-3-years-old

Choosing a baby beaker or cup

It's important to choose the right kind of beaker or cup. A cup or beaker with a free-flow lid (without a non-spill valve) is better than a bottle or beaker with a teat as it will help your baby learn how to sip rather than suck. As soon as your child is ready, encourage them to move to drinking from an open cup.

Drinks for babies and young children

Not all drinks are suitable for babies and young children. The following information details what to give to your child and when.

Breast milk

Breast milk is the only food or drink babies need in the first 6 months of their life. It should continue to be given alongside an increasingly varied diet once you introduce solid foods from around 6 months. The World Health Organization recommends that all babies are breastfed for up to 2 years or longer.

Breastfeeding up to 12 months is associated with a lower risk of tooth decay.

Formula milk

First infant formula is usually based on cow's milk and is the only suitable alternative to breast milk in the first 12 months of your baby's life. All infant formula in the UK has to meet the same standards to help babies grow and develop. It does not matter if you choose a cheaper or more expensive brand of formula.

Follow-on formula is not suitable for babies under 6 months, and you do not need to introduce it after 6 months. Formula milks are not needed once your baby is 12 months old. This includes first infant formula, follow-on formula, growing-up milks and toddler milks.

Cow's milk can be introduced as a main drink from 12 months.

Read more about the types of infant formula at <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/formula-feeding-how-to-feed-your-baby-safely>

Non-cow's milk formula

Goat's milk formula is available and produced to the same nutritional standards as cow's milk formula. Goat's milk formula is not suitable for babies with cow's milk protein allergy – please see page 38.

'Goodnight' milk

'Goodnight' milk is not suitable for babies under 6 months old. This type of formula is not needed, and there's no evidence that babies settle better or sleep longer after having it.

Water

Once your baby has started to eat solid foods (from around 6 months) you can offer them sips of water from a cup or beaker with meals. Drinking water for babies over 6 months does not need to be boiled first.

Fully breastfed babies do not need any water until they have started eating solid foods. During hot weather they may want to breastfeed more than usual.

Formula-fed babies under 6 months of age may need small sips of cooled boiled water during hot weather as well as their usual milk feeds.

Find out how to make up baby formula safely using water at: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/formula-feeding-how-to-feed-your-baby-safely>

Cow's milk

Cow's milk can be used in cooking or mixed with food from around 6 months but should not be given as a main drink to babies until they are 12 months old. This is because cow's milk does not contain the right balance of nutrients to meet your baby's needs.

Pasteurised whole milk and semi-skimmed milk can be introduced as a main drink once your child is 1 year old. Skimmed and 1% milk should not be given as a main drink to children under 5 years old because they do not contain enough calories. Lower-fat milks can be used in cooking from 1 year old.

Unpasteurised milk

Young children should not be given unpasteurised milk because of the higher risk of food poisoning.

Goat's and sheep's milk

Goat's and sheep's milk are not suitable as a main drink for babies under 1 year old as, like cow's milk, they do not contain enough iron and other nutrients babies this age need. As long as they are pasteurised, they can be given as a main drink once your baby is 1 year old.

Soya drinks and other milk alternatives

You can give your child unsweetened calcium-fortified milk alternatives, such as soya, oat or almond drinks, from the age of 1 as part of a healthy balanced diet.

If your child has an allergy or intolerance to milk, talk to your health visitor or GP. They can advise you about suitable milk alternatives.

Rice drinks

Children under 5 years old should not have shop-bought rice drinks as a substitute for breast milk, infant formula or cow's milk as they may contain too much arsenic. This does not apply to prescribed rice formula – see page 38.

Arsenic is found naturally in the environment and can find its way into our food and water.

Rice tends to take up more arsenic than other grains, but this does not mean that your baby cannot eat rice. In the UK, there are maximum levels of inorganic arsenic allowed in rice and rice products, and even stricter levels are set for foods intended for young children.

Do not worry if your child has already had rice drinks. There's no immediate risk to them, but it's best to switch to a different kind of milk.

Fruit juice and smoothies

Fruit juices, such as orange juice, are a good source of vitamin C. However, they also contain natural sugars and acids, which can cause tooth decay. Babies under 12 months do not need fruit juice or smoothies.

If you choose to give these to your baby, dilute the juices and smoothies (one part juice to 10 parts water). Limit them to mealtimes (rather than between meals) as this helps reduce the risk of tooth decay.

From 5 years old, you can give your child undiluted fruit juice or smoothies. Stick to no more than one glass (about 150 ml) a day, served with meals.

Squashes, flavoured milk, 'fruit' or 'juice' drinks and fizzy drinks

Squashes, flavoured milk, 'fruit' or 'juice' drinks and fizzy drinks are not suitable for young babies. They contain sugar and can cause tooth decay, even when diluted.

Caring for their 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 3 years of age, use a smear of fluoride toothpaste on a dry brush.

www.childsmile.nhs.scot

For older babies and young children, these drinks can fill your child up so they are not hungry for healthier food. Instead, offer sips of water from a cup with meals.

Fizzy drinks are acidic and can damage tooth enamel so they should not be given to babies and young children.

Diet or reduced-sugar drinks are not recommended for babies and young children. Even low-calorie drinks and no-added-sugar drinks can encourage children to develop a sweet tooth.

Slush ice drinks

Children aged 4 years and under should not have slush ice drinks, sometimes known as slushies, as they may contain too much glycerol. Slush ice drinks can have high levels of glycerol in them, used instead of sugar, to create the slush effect.

Young children who have too much glycerol may get a headache or feel sick. If they have a lot of glycerol, it can cause symptoms such as feeling dizzy, low blood sugar (glucose), confusion and they can even pass out.

‘Baby’ and herbal drinks

‘Baby’ and herbal drinks usually contain sugars and are not recommended.

Hot drinks

Tea and coffee are not suitable for babies or young children. If sugar is added, this can lead to tooth decay.

Information from the NHS website – **www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/drinks-and-cups-for-babies-and-young-children** – as at 1 July 2026. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0 – **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3**

Foods to avoid if weaning before 6 months

If you start to give solids before 6 months, the following foods should be avoided, including as ingredients in ready-made foods.

- Unpasteurised milks, yoghurts or cheeses – these should never be given to infants or toddlers at any stage.
- Liver and liver products (such as pâté).
- Whole nuts and seeds.
- Honey (remember honey should not be given to your baby until they are 12 months old).
- Shellfish.

All children require breast or infant formula until 12 months of age as their main drink. In the initial stages of weaning, small amounts of solid foods will be given in addition to their usual daily amount of breast milk or formula and you will gradually reduce breast milk or formula. If you wean before 6 months, offer very small quantities. You will need to puree foods to a smooth, thin consistency. Suitable foods to start with are plain baby rice mixed with breast milk or infant formula and served in a bowl (never in a bottle), pureed vegetables such as spinach, courgette, or carrot, or pureed fruit such as avocado, pear or banana. Then progress with other foods.

Until your baby is 6 months old, 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. 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 6 months as your baby gets used to taking foods from a spoon.

Babies should never be weaned before 4 months (17 weeks).



Allergy prevention

When you're weaning your baby, it's recommended that you try one new food at a time – that is, not mixing foods – until the individual foods are well established in your baby's diet.

Allergen-containing foods for your baby to try

Introducing and keeping the following foods in the diet regularly, from the early stages of weaning, can help prevent allergy: peanut, egg, cow's milk, wheat, tree nuts (almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, Brazils) soya, fish and sesame (tahini).

See the list below for suggestions on how to introduce these foods.

[In the list below we detail for each item:

Allergen

- Spoon-feeding ideas
- Finger-foods ideas]

• Peanut

- Stir peanut butter into porridge, cereal or yoghurt
- Peanut butter spread onto toast, crackers, puffs or rice cakes

Egg

- Mashed, scrambled or boiled egg
- Omelette, pancake, eggy bread or frittata

Cow's milk

- Yoghurt or cow's milk mixed into porridge or cereal
- Cheesy omelette, quesadilla or frittata. Soft cheese spread on toast, crackers, puffs or rice cakes

Wheat

- Wholegrain wheat-based cereal
- Toast, pancakes, muffins, quesadillas or well-cooked pasta

Tree nuts

- Sprinkle ground almonds into porridge, cereal or yoghurt. Stir cashew or almond butter into porridge, cereal or yoghurt
- Cashew or almond butter spread onto toast, crackers, puffs or rice cakes

Soya

- Mashed edamame beans or tofu. Reduced-salt soya sauce mixed into rice
- Toast fingers (ensure bread ingredients contain soya)

Fish

- White or oily fish, or shellfish mashed into potatoes or vegetables
- Fish fingers or fish cakes

Sesame

- Tahini or houmous (ensure the ingredients contain sesame) mashed into vegetables.
- Tahini or houmous (ensure the ingredients contain sesame) spread onto toast, crackers, puffs or rice cakes

When you are introducing nuts, peanuts or seeds they should be ground to avoid choking. There is further information on preventing choking on page 26.

If your baby has eczema

Food and weaning can be messy. If your baby has eczema or sensitive skin, a thick barrier cream should be applied to prevent direct contact with your baby's delicate skin, until the food has been proven to be well tolerated by mouth, that is, there have been no reactions.

It's recommended not to apply food directly to the skin before introducing it by mouth.

Cow's milk protein allergy (CMPA)

If your baby has been diagnosed with CMPA by a health professional, you may be advised to continue to breastfeed or to use a prescribed milk-free formula. Please note, goat's milk formula and lactose-free formula are not suitable for babies with CMPA. You will be supported by your local paediatric dietetic department for milk-free information.

Please also note, a prescribed milk-free formula can include a rice milk formula – this is unrelated to rice milk drink from the supermarket. Rice milk formula does not contain arsenic and is a safe milk-free formula that can be prescribed.

Skin moisturisers and emollients

Avoid emollients which contain food proteins in children with eczema. It's important, especially for babies, that a skincare product, moisturiser, emollient or oil should not contain a potential food allergen, for example, oat, soya, arachis (peanut). This is because they might become sensitised through the broken skin barrier and then go on to actually develop an allergy to that food.

Also, ensure careful hand-washing before and during moisturiser application and baby massage.

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. Food should be prepared for the age and stage of the child – for example, pureeing, mashing and chopping as required – to avoid choking risk. There's more information about preventing choking on page 26.

Lentil and potato mash (makes 4–5 portions)

50 g (4 dessertspoons) red lentils, rinsed

1 medium potato, peeled and diced into small pieces

Method:

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

Measuring 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 (in natural juice, not syrup), chopped into pieces
2 tablespoons water

Method:

- Place the 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.

Salmon and potato pie (makes 3 portions)

100 g skinless salmon fillet
2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
6 dessertspoons pasteurised whole milk – add some pasteurised grated cheese for flavour

Method:

- Place the salmon in a pan and cover with milk. Poach by gently simmering until the fish flakes easily with a fork.
- Remove the salmon but keep the milk to add to the potatoes later.
- Cook the 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 the fish and add to the potato – or serve separately.

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

Make this simple sauce to go with pasta.

**1 dessertspoon vegetable oil
1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped
1/2 a red pepper, washed, deseeded and finely chopped
1/2 a courgette, washed and finely chopped
400 g can chopped tomatoes in juice**

Method:

- Heat the oil and gently soften the onion for 5 minutes on a low heat, stirring continually.
- Add the pepper and courgette and cook on a low heat for a further 5 minutes. Keep stirring.
- Add the tomatoes, cover with a lid and cook for 15 minutes or until the 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 the pasta according to the packet instructions.
- Drain and serve with 2 dessertspoons of the tomato and vegetable sauce and top with cheese.

Variation: Add 200 g (8 oz) of 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, and grated or finely chopped
100 g (8 dessertspoons) split red lentils
1/2 teaspoon mild curry powder (not paste)
200 ml water
1 small carton pasteurised, full-fat, natural yoghurt

Method:

- Heat the oil and gently soften the onion for 5 minutes.
- Stir in the carrot, lentils and curry powder.
- Add water, stir and bring to the boil. Cover with a pot lid, reduce the 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 them from the heat and stir in natural yoghurt.
- Mash as required and serve with boiled white rice.

Variation: A small chicken breast with the skin removed or Quorn fillet, finely diced, can 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
1/2 small onion, finely chopped
1 small carrot, scrubbed and grated
1 tablespoon of frozen peas
4 medium potatoes or sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into four equal pieces
1–2 tablespoons pasteurised whole milk

Method:

- Place the 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 the peas 5 minutes before the end of the cooking time.
- Stir occasionally, adding more water as required.
- Cover the potatoes with water in a pan and put a lid on the pan. Cook them until soft. Add more water if needed. Then drain and mash with 1–2 tablespoons of milk.
- When the mince is cooked, serve it with the mash.

Translations. Easy read. BSL. Audio. Large print. Braille.

Translations and other formats are available on request at:

- Email: **phs.otherformats@phs.scot**
- Phone: **0131 314 5300**

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