



guide to worry free weaning

Weaning your baby may seem like a daunting experience but there's no need to worry. Meal times should be fun affairs. With a little preparation and patience you'll find it as rewarding as your baby will, follow my guide to worry free weaning for comprehensive advice.

When should I start weaning?

You will need to think about weaning your baby off breast or infant milk after around 6 months. There are no hard and fast rules as to when you should start but it is generally agreed at 26 weeks your baby will start to need additional nourishment from that provided by just breast or infant milk alone. Of course it will differ from child to child, but should not be left any later than 8 months or you may hamper your baby's development of normal eating and chewing behaviour. Solid foods should not normally be introduced to your baby before 17 weeks. If you do need to introduce foods before this time, avoid wheat, gluten, eggs, fish and shellfish, liver, citrus fruits, soft and unpasteurised cheeses.

How will I know?

As with many cases during weaning, let your baby tell you if he's ready. Some clues that your baby is ready to try solid foods are:

- He may start to show an interest in your food, perhaps watching you eat or may try grabbing at your food.
- If he's hungrier than usual or isn't satisfied by a normal feed.
- Perhaps he wakes hungry in the night when before he was sleeping through.
- Does he put things in his mouth or maybe suck on his fists?

any questions?

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Be patient

Weaning is a great time to engage with your baby and many specialists feel it's an important way to encourage a sense of well-being. Remember to be patient. Weaning is a slow process, your baby has to learn how to swallow and explore new textures and sensations. He may struggle to finish the food you give him but just like us grown ups, a baby's appetite will vary from day to day. You should never need to force him to eat. Always let your baby guide you and develop at his own pace.

Beginning the process

By far the best food to start him on is baby rice. This is a gluten free product and specially formulated for babies. Mix the baby rice with your regular breast or infant milk until it reaches the consistency of single cream. Avoid introducing your baby to food when he's either very tired, hungry or upset. Choose a meal time either at lunch or early evening and make sure you have plenty of time and no distractions. Any distress or anxiety on your part will be sensed by your

baby. Make sure your baby is able to hold his head in an upright position whilst sitting propped up and you are both sitting comfortably.

Always spoon feed your baby, **never** add food to his bottle. Remember you are trying to wean your baby **off** the bottle, it will also increase the risk he might choke. If your baby pushes the food out of his mouth or refuses it, don't worry, he probably just isn't quite ready yet, continue milk feeding and try again in a few days. During the early months of weaning, it's important your baby still receives his daily portions of breast or infant milk, about 600ml. Your aim is to slowly replace the milk feeds with solid food meals. To start with, your baby only needs a taste of solid food then little by little, you can build his up his intake, but still give him his milk. Start by reducing the milk given at lunch time or mid afternoon and increasing the amount of baby rice. Once your baby is comfortable with the concept of solid food, you may want to start trying new foods with different textures and tastes.

Worry Free Weaning

1. Choose the right time. A quiet relaxed moment when you and your baby will not be disturbed.
2. Sterilise all baby feeding equipment - bowl and spoon. And wash you and your baby's hands thoroughly before you start.
3. Offer only a little on the spoon and gauge your baby's reaction. You will only need to give your baby small portions. Offer verbal encouragement.
4. Don't push your baby to eat more than he wants. Don't worry if he doesn't eat much or anything at all. Let him go at his own pace.
5. Over 6-8 weeks of weaning, increase the amount from just a taste in the first week up to eating solid food 3 times a day, but match your baby's appetite. It's important to keep feeding him breast or infant milk throughout this period.

Lets have a look at a suggested menu plan:

	During first 2 weeks of weaning	After weaning for about 2 weeks	From about 5 or 6 months
Number of meals a day	One	Two	Three
Breakfast	Breast or infant milk	Baby rice mixed with breast or infant milk	Baby rice mixed with breast or infant milk
Midday	Breast or infant milk	Breast or infant milk	Puree of meat or pulses and vegetables
Early Evening	Baby rice mixed with breast or infant milk	Fruit or vegetable puree and breast or infant milk	Fruit puree and breast or infant milk
Late Evening	Breast or infant milk	Breast or infant milk	Breast or infant milk

- Thicken the consistency of the food and begin to combine different fruits or vegetables. Don't be afraid to experiment with combinations.
- After 6 months** introduce chunkier finely chopped foods to encourage chewing. Babies can chew even if their teeth haven't come through. Introduce new concepts slowly by mixing small amounts of chunky food in with pureed food.
- Slowly increase the variety of foods, limiting cereals to once a day.
Begin to add wheat products and foods that contain gluten, bread, pasta, breakfast cereal, foods made from wheat, oat, rye and barley.

Introduce:

- Citrus fruits - oranges, grapefruit and satsumas
- Eggs - well cooked with solid yolks
- Mild flavoured cheese
- Full-fat yoghurt and fromage frais
- Fish and meats, well mashed or minced

Avoid:

- Any added sugar or salt, whole or broken nuts, honey

- Always encourage your baby to try and feed himself. Let him put food in his hands, give him his own spoon to hold. It may be messy but it'll help him grow more confident and make meals times more fun. Good food presentation will also help to make the experience more appealing to your baby.

Menu plan for 6-9 months

- Choose the right time. A quiet relaxed moment when you and your baby will not be disturbed.
- Sterilise all baby feeding equipment - bowl and spoon. And wash you and your baby's hands thoroughly before you start.
- Offer only a little on the spoon and gauge your baby's reaction. You will only need to give your baby small portions. Offer verbal encouragement.
- Don't push your baby to eat more than he wants. Don't worry if he doesn't eat much or anything at all. Let him go at his own pace.
- Over 6-8 weeks of weaning, increase the amount from just a taste in the first week up to eating solid food 3 times a day, but match your baby's appetite. It's important to keep feeding him breast or infant milk throughout this period.

Lets have a look at a suggested menu plan:

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast	Baby rice or cornmeal porridge (mixed with either breast or infant milk or whole milk)	Wheat-based cereal (with breast or infant milk or whole milk)	Mashed banana and toast fingers
Midday	Spaghetti Bolognese (chopped) Plain fromage frais with stewed apples	Minced lamb and vegetable casserole with mashed potato Soft, ripe peeled pear or peach (as finger food)	Lentil and vegetable bake Semolina with strawberries
Early Evening	Fish, broccoli and mash potato Cooked carrot (as finger food)	Scrambled egg with toast	Macaroni cheese
Late Evening	Breast or infant milk	Breast or infant milk	Breast or infant milk



From 9-12 months your baby will probably be eating 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks each day and may be ready to starting eating with you, as part of a family meal. Give your baby the same food as you, let him share in the experience. Do not season your baby's food, separate it before adding additional salt, pepper or spices.

Each day try to give your baby:

- 3 or 4 servings of starchy foods like potato, pasta bread or rice
- 3 or 4 servings of fruit and vegetables
- 1 serving of meat, fish or egg
- At least 2 servings of pulses such as peas, beans or lentils

NEVER LEAVE YOUR BABY ALONE WHEN FEEDING

Drinks

As your baby begins to eat more food he will become more thirsty. Babies need water for growth so require a good fluid intake. Milk is high in calories and will fill your baby up so the best drinks to offer him are cooled, boiled water or watered down fruit juice. Avoid fruit cordials as these are loaded with sugars and preservatives. Try to avoid filling your child up with liquids before meal times. Offer him a drink after feeding and at about twice a day in between meals. Don't withhold drinks however if your baby is thirsty.

Your questions answered

What do I need to start weaning?

Follow this as a suggested weaning kit:

- Fork, masher, sieve and/or hand blender
- Brightly coloured plastic bowls and spoons will make feeding time more fun. Choose ones with good grips
- A bib: a sleeveless, easy to wipe clean one will be best.
- A baby chair, unless you are comfortable to sit the baby on your lap for the initial feedings
- A high chair for when you need to sit your baby upright
- Baby wipes
- Storage tub or ice cube trays to store and freeze left over food.

Why does my baby gag when I feed him?

There are many reasons why a baby will gag at food. Usually it's just a question of technique. Make sure the food is not too thick. Don't over load the spoon. Keep the portions small. Be sure you are not placing the spoon too far inside baby's mouth. Gagging is also one way which your baby can tell you that he's had enough, so if he's gagging towards the end of a meal, he's probably full up.

Why does my baby have a poor appetite?

A babies' appetite may vary from day to day, just like our own. If his appetite is consistently small however, be sure you are not filling him up with milk feeds or drinks in between meals. If he's still milk feeding, only offer it after solid foods, and regulate drinks through out the day. It might be that you baby is thirsty at meal times and a quick drink will help him to continue eating.

My baby is teething what can I do to help?

Offer him more chunky foods to encourage chewing or let him chew on fingers of toast, peeled banana, segments of cheese or soft vegetables like cooked carrot or green beans. Once your baby can hold them in his hands you can offer these as finger foods to snack on. To help ease some of the discomfort caused by growing teeth offer him pieces of apple or pear, these help to sooth the gums.

When can I give my baby cow's milk?

You should avoid giving your baby cows milk as a drink before he is one year old. Though you can add cows milk to foods during cooking after 6 months. Always give your baby full fat milk as this will help with this development.

How long should meal times take?

Generally meal times shouldn't last longer than 20 minutes. Babies tend to lose interest after this time. Take away the remaining food, don't force you baby to finish it all, the chances are he will no longer be hungry.

Is it best to buy food or make it myself?

This is very much a question of choice and time! There are a good number of baby foods available to buy with varying ingredients and textures depending on what stage of weaning you are at. It is wise to have some bought food available at home in case of emergencies. Be careful not to freeze bought food in the jar, as the glass can shatter leaving shards in the food. Remember also to follow exactly the manufacturer's reheating instructions. Some baby foods are designed to react with the enzymes in baby's saliva helping to make the food become runnier and aid the child in swallowing. Therefore, it is important not to spoon feed your child straight from the jar, as this will spoil the food.

Of course it's preferable to make your own food, this way you know exactly what's in it and you can tailor recipes to better suit your baby's tastes. Just make sure all the equipment you use is clean and you always wash your hands before preparing any food. It's recommended that you sterilise all bowls and spoons until your baby is 6 months. It's more economical to make larger batches and freeze the left over food. Using ice cube trays is a great way to do this, the blocks are just the right size for a single portion. Date each batch and use within 3 months. Only ever reheat the food one.

Can I reheat food in the microwave?

Yes you can, but it's not ideal. Often microwaves don't heat food evenly ALWAYS stir the food and check the temperature before feeding it to your baby. Otherwise take the required amount of food and place it in a clean cup. Stand the cup in a pan of hot water, cover it with a saucer and leave it to warm through. In a few minutes the food will be lukewarm and ready to serve. Stir the food to get it an even temperature and remember to test it before feeding it to your baby.

Should I hold my baby or put him in a chair?

It is often a good idea to keep your baby close to you during the early stages of weaning until he gets used to being spoon-fed. You can put the baby on your knee, with his head resting against your shoulder. You can then hold his arm to stop him interfering. After a time you might find a high chair more useful as this will leave you with both hands free.